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**AIR RESPONSE**

to the

**Tet Offensive**

30 JANUARY-29 FEBRUARY 1968

**12 August 1968**

**HQ PACAF**

**Directorate, Tactical Evaluation  
CHECO Division**

**Prepared by:**

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**DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE**  
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WARREN H. PETERSON, Colonel, USAF  
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## FOREWORD

This report traces the 1968 Communist Tet Offensive in Vietnam. Significant events which had an impact on airpower, and the application and responsiveness of air, are examined during this period of extremely heightened military activity. Air response ranged across the entire spectrum of air capability, from tactical airstrikes to the ground defense of air installations. Close support of ground troops in cities, air base defense, VNAF performance, emergency airlift, and civic responsiveness are all examined in this report.

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CHAPTER I  
OVERVIEW OF TET OFFENSIVE

This study defines the Tet Offensive as the heavy fighting which began on 30 January 1968 and continued to 29 February (arbitrary dates) throughout all South Vietnam. The chronological boundaries of the Tet Offensive were directly related to the intentions, objectives, and actions of the enemy, and the offensive could be termed closed when those aims were achieved, defeated, or superseded. Militarily, his objectives were not achieved; however, there are indications that his political aims received some degree of success.

Early in the campaign, the Commander, U.S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (COMUSMACV), believed the enemy was trying to establish the conditions which existed in Laos prior to the Geneva Conventions. By occupying the border area with regular forces and establishing control of the cities by political uprisings, the enemy prepared for negotiations that would win recognition for the National Liberation Front (NLF). The Deputy Commander, U.S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (DEPCOMUSMACV) thought the objective was to establish a complete political and military victory with the end result of putting into power all elements of the new government. <sup>1/</sup>

Documents confiscated during the offensive indicate the attacks were aimed at a military and political victory and a new government. For instance, the following excerpt from an enemy document said the offensive was to: <sup>2/</sup>

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*"Carry direct attack on all the headquarters of the enemy, to disrupt the U.S. imperialists will for aggression and to smash the Puppet Government and Puppet Army, the lackeys of the U.S. We (the Viet Cong) will restore power to the people... (to) fulfill our revolutionary task of establishing democracy throughout the country."*

The question could be asked: Did the offensive begin with the surprise attacks on the cities during the Vietnamese New Year, or with the meticulous preparations begun many months before: MACV infiltration reports showed that more than 10,000 North Vietnamese Army (NVA) troops infiltrated to South Vietnam during the period August-November 1967, which brought the total NVA strength up to a minimum of 88,000 men and possible strength of more than 162,000. <sup>3/</sup>

The battles preceding the Tet Offensive at Loc Ninh, Dak To, and Bo Duc pulled many U.S. battalions out of populated lowlands into isolated border areas, helping to create a "border thinking" among U.S. personnel, who talked of having pushed the enemy to the borders and of having blocked his return to the populated regions. The siege of Khe Sanh, which began in mid-January, further encouraged this optimistic viewpoint because the combat base lay on Route 9, the natural infiltration route for NVA troops skirting west around the DMZ. Yet, while U.S. troops were concerned with the borders, the enemy encircled the cities and military bases with troops and supplies for the Tet attacks. <sup>4/</sup>

No clearcut date exists for the termination of the offensive. If the enemy's objective was the permanent occupation of the cities, then the



[REDACTED]

offensive failed in the first week. But if the objective was the reversal of a deteriorating military situation, by drawing allied troops out of the rural areas into the cities, then the enemy offensive continued for many months, as shown by the early May offensive. Despite VC-NVA promises to their troops that the winter-spring campaign would cause the population of the cities to defect to the NLF, the temporary aims of the offensive were apparently to seize the countryside by diversionary attacks on the cities and to encourage anti-war sentiment in the United States.

In this view, the offensive was a major and sustained escalation of the fighting toward the general objective of the war of national liberation. Therefore, while the cutoff date of 29 February may seem arbitrary, it roughly coincides with a return to "normal" operations, such as the resumption of scheduled airlift missions.

By the end of February, Hue had also been recaptured and on 10 March, the Allies initiated the massive offensive Operation QUYET THANG (Resolve to Win) in III Corps to push the enemy away from Saigon and Bien Hoa.

At midnight on 29-30 January, the Vietnamese Year of the Monkey began amid the traditional cacophony of fireworks and the crush of milling crowds. Under cover of the Tet truce and exploding firecrackers, the enemy attacked most of the major cities in II Corps--Nha Trang, Kontum, Pleiku, Ban Me Thout, Qui Nhon--and Da Nang in I Corps. Vietnamese and Free World Forces headquarters and airfields suffered heavy mortar and ground attacks as significant portions of each city fell into enemy hands. Fighting continued throughout the day and by 1800 hours all air bases were in Condition Red in



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anticipation of terrorist attacks during the coming night.

At 0300 hours on 31 January, simultaneous attacks occurred the length of South Vietnam. At Hue, the Air Force lost eight observation planes when the enemy overran the airstrip and most of the city. <sup>5/</sup> South from Quang Tri City, the major towns battled the enemy, although around the DMZ, the enemy held back and seemed to mass for the siege of Khe Sanh. In II Corps, heavy battles continued in the major cities, although Dalat was not attacked until 1 February. In III Corps, the pattern of simultaneous assaults on most of the provincial capitals did not materialize. Rather, the VC concentrated on the cluster of cities and bases around Saigon and Bien Hoa. In Saigon, the American Embassy, the Presidential Palace, and Tan Son Nhut Airfield experienced heavy fighting which, in some cases, penetrated American defenses. In IV Corps, the pattern of I and II Corps was repeated--nearly every provincial capital was infiltrated and the government facilities besieged. Across the country, the unprecedented magnitude of the enemy offensive threw the Allies onto the defensive, forcing the abandonment of much of the countryside in an effort to protect the cities. (Fig. 1.)

The people of South Vietnam were shocked by these attacks which were aimed mainly at heavily inhabited centers. Assassination and terror squads roamed the provincial and district centers with the intent of eliminating political and religious leaders. Their objective was twofold. First, it would remove the cohesive force of the government. Second, it would eliminate potential participants in the coalition government, if such an

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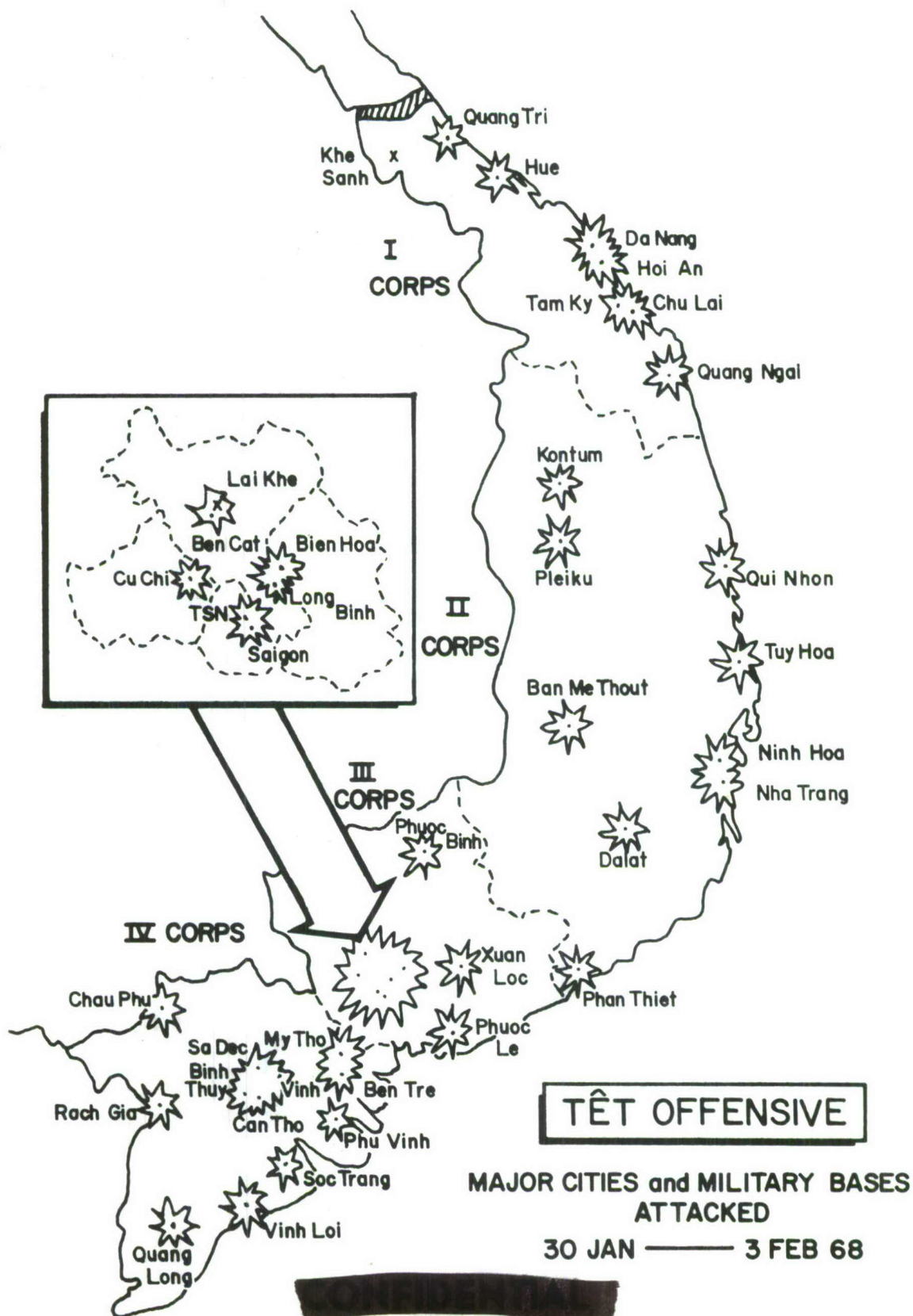


Figure 1

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event could be brought about. Various terrorist ploys were adopted. For example, on several occasions, the VC committed acts of plunder, while wearing government uniforms, in an effort to discredit government soldiers. Although the people understood and respected force, an adverse effect was created as reports indicated the population resented these attacks which destroyed their homes, created food shortages, and killed and maimed thousands of innocent people. <sup>6/</sup>

In Saigon, ARVN Operation TRAN HUNG DAO (4-17 February) cleared the city after many days of severe street fighting against an enemy well-concealed in the maze of refugee slums. Entire blocks of Cholon burned, as a result of the Allies employing airstrikes and tanks to drive the VC out of strongholds such as the Phu Tho racetrack. Adding to the holocaust, the enemy also initiated fires to cover his movement and to hinder friendly troops. <sup>7/</sup>

Other cities suffering major damage from enemy attacks and allied counterattacks included Hue, Nha Trang, Ban Me Thout, Dalat, and Ben Tre. The latter evoked the much quoted statement by a U.S. Army officer that "It became necessary to destroy the town to save it." <sup>8/</sup>

On 18 February, another, though very much weaker, enemy offensive began, with the main thrust in IV and III Corps. At Tan Son Nhut and Bien Hoa, intermittent 122-mm rocket bombardments began and continued sporadically throughout the month. During the next few days, the 460th Tactical Reconnaissance Wing photographed the area as far as 11 miles from Tan Son Nhut

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to pinpoint potential rocket launch sites. A week later, a photo mosaic revealed four enemy sampans and led to the capture of miscellaneous rocket equipment. <sup>9/</sup>

Rocket attacks also put a heavy drain on strained FAC resources, and required some to be pulled away from visual reconnaissance (VR) in the rural and border areas. VR missions before Tet had not observed enough unusual enemy traffic on the jungle trails and canals toward the cities and military installations to alert intelligence personnel of the scope of the enemy infiltration, but there had been a noted increase in trail use. <sup>10/</sup> After Tet, the pullback of American and Vietnamese troops in III Corps to the populated areas also pulled the FACs out of the unpopulated areas, and allowed the enemy to move unobserved in positioning resupplies for the continuing offensive and for the southwest monsoon season (May-October). For example: the FACs at Dau Tieng in Tay Ninh were moved back to Bien Hoa when the 3d Brigade, 25th Infantry Division, came in from the field.

With initiation of the enemy rocket harassment campaign, a 24-hour "rocket watch" was flown over Saigon-Bien Hoa, one which the various FAC elements in III Corps had to support if feasible. In the first five days of harassment, beginning on 18 February, the 19th Tactical Air Support Squadron (III Corps) flew an average of 47 hours each night compared to the late January average of two or three hours. <sup>11/</sup>

By the end of the month, the flying hours on rocket watch were cut back and the FACs freed for more VR missions in the border regions and traditional

[REDACTED]

enemy sanctuaries. The return of American infantry to rural operations also put the FACs back in the outlying regions. They reported unprecedented traffic from Cambodia with some "trails" more like highways.

The much discussed "phases" of the Tet Offensive require comment. Army and Air Force intelligence sources quite often divided the offensive into phases in search of patterns in enemy operations. Timetables from various confiscated documents gave differing but not necessarily mutually exclusive schedules for victory. One confiscated diary, with the heading "Offensive Schedule", gave these dates: <sup>12/</sup>

28 January: First phase of general offensive and general uprising

17 February: Second phase

3 March : Third Phase

The first two phases generally coincided with other evaluations and with events, but the third phase did not materialize in the form of enemy attacks. Another confiscated document also talked of a planned third phase: <sup>13/</sup>

*"In this third phase, we should try to use the fifth columnists in troop proselytizing to sieze the objective."*

There were indications that the VC infrastructure was uncertain about higher headquarters policy and phase timing. The following excerpt from an enemy intermediate command level document stated: <sup>14/</sup>

*"In compliance with the policy of higher echelon, Anh Tan Current Affairs Committee...has prescribed*

[REDACTED]

*the time frame for each phase (as follows):*

*"Phase 1: January, February, and March--liberate the rural areas.*

*"Phase 2: April, May, and June--complete the national democratic revolution."*

However, this second timetable was not incompatible with the view that three phases were planned from late January to early March. In retrospect, this analysis appears to be the most plausible, possibly because the phases are broader, allowing more flexibility and adjustment.

Another opinion came from COMUSMACV within a few days of the massive Tet attacks. He outlined his conception of enemy plans as having three phases:

Phase 1: Border campaign at Loc Ninh and Dak To

Phase 2: Tet attack on the cities

Phase 3: Attack on Khe Sanh

The view that Dak To and Loc Ninh were preparatory phases to Tet was contradicted by Colonel Tran Van Duc, a defector to the Allies in April. Under interrogation, he said the local unit commanders had asked for these attacks to build morale and gain combat experience. Of course, approval from higher headquarters may have been for longer-range reasons (such as Tet) than those given by the unit commanders. <sup>15/</sup>

Operation NIAGARA at Khe Sanh, and its massive air support, apparently stopped the third phase of this timetable. COMUSMACV's schedule had a major similarity with the three-phase view of attacks from late January to



[REDACTED]

early March--the trailing away of enemy strength after the first attacks, so that he could not mount a decisive third offensive.

It was concluded that there was no single set of phases that outlined each step and required an ironclad enemy adherence, blind to the realities of allied resistance. The Tet Offensive did draw the Allies out of the rural areas; it did raise serious doubts about how close the enemy was to defeat; and it did cost the Air Force millions of dollars in destroyed and damaged property. This was done, however, at a staggering cost in enemy dead--estimated in the tens of thousands. Hence, no final assault occurred at Khe Sanh, and the 18 February offensive was a shadow of Tet. In fact, the latter appeared to just fade away as the VC/NVA exhibited a growing reluctance to maintain contact with allied forces and showed signs of concern over their supplies. The most dramatic evidence of enemy supply problems was their sharply increased naval activity. Apparently willing to accept heavy losses, they attempted to resupply certain units by employing the risky gambit of landing junks and trawlers on the coasts of I, II, and IV Corps. <sup>16/</sup> Airstrikes had a disruptive effect on enemy resupply efforts and may have been instrumental in delaying future offensive plans. Airstrikes also repeatedly hit supply routes near the Cambodian Border, taking a heavy toll on sampans and other cargo carriers. <sup>17/</sup>

In the cases of Khe Sanh and the general Tet Offensive, the Air Force played a major role due to the advantages airpower had against an enemy who concentrated his ground troops for attack. Along the edges and occasionally deep into the cities, the close air support, in conjunction with artillery

[REDACTED]

and ground forces, killed enemy troops by the hundreds whenever they gathered for an assault. The reliance of Army troops on tactical air, expending for the first time on cities, caused heavy urban damage, the price paid for clearing out an infiltrated enemy. The successful resistance of all air bases to ground attacks helped blunt the offensive and provided ideal staging areas for allied counterattacks. Thus, in the straight-out fighting, the Air Force successfully met the surge requirements of the enemy offensive.

Confiscated documents point to a clearly perceptible theme--the communists based their hope for eventual success in cities on a general uprising by the populace. Enemy documents state that initially there was a general enthusiastic response to the "uprising", but a few days later these same people showed signs of being dubious about the outcome of the battle (particularly in the Saigon area). On at least one occasion, the seed for doubt was planted by "so many aircraft overhead".<sup>18/</sup> Air presence had a definite psychological impact.

There were, however, some disquieting notes. For example, the Vietnamese Air Force (VNAF) liberal leave policy for the Tet holidays left it unprepared for heavy sustained operations. Without the assumption of many flight line and cockpit jobs by Air Force advisors, there is doubt that the VNAF could have met its responsibilities in the first few days of Tet.<sup>19/</sup>

Under the strain of mushrooming airlift requirements, the already near-saturated airlift became inundated to the point that its priority system became ineffectual. This arose from not having enough C-130s in-country to

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handle requests. Yet, to keep increasing the number of airframes in-country would require expansion of ground facilities and more support troops--a further U.S. involvement in the war. Caught in this dilemma, the airlift could not handle the surge requirements of Tet because it did not have the resources.

Civic action and nation building programs also suffered during Tet, because so many of the rural areas were abandoned and because the offensive disrupted routine projects. For instance, 24-hour curfews confined personnel to the air bases. Humanitarian relief to Tet Offensive victims from Air Force donations and airlift missions was significant, and doubtlessly much appreciated by the Vietnamese people, but this was a definite shift from long-term improvement projects.

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## CHAPTER II

### BASE DEFENSE

USAF air bases had been attacked by mortars, rockets, and ground forces in the past, but the magnitude of the Tet assault was unprecedented. Coordination and timing for such widespread attacks were sharp, with one possible exception, Da Nang Air Base, which was taken under fire approximately 24 hours earlier than the almost simultaneous attacks on other installations.<sup>1/</sup>

As a result of the premature assault on Da Nang plus other intelligence indicators that attacks were imminent, the Commander, Seventh Air Force, directed Security Condition Red (Option 1) be implemented at all Vietnam air bases. The directive was given a full nine hours prior to the initiation of the Tet Offensive and proved invaluable to Tan Son Nhut and Bien Hoa Air Bases in their successful repulsion of the initial attacks.<sup>2/</sup>

The extensive base attacks probably had several objectives, which ranged from overrun to harassment, but certainly they were aimed at preventing allied reinforcements and air support of the Marine Khe Sanh outpost, where a large scale enemy offensive was expected.<sup>3/</sup>

The following is an account of the attacks on Tan Son Nhut, Bien Hoa, Da Nang, and Binh Thuy air facilities. Although other bases faced similar problems in one degree or another, it is significant to note that no major USAF base was overrun or forced to go non-operational.

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### Tan Son Nhut

What could well have been one of the most significant battles of the war was fought at Tan Son Nhut on 31 January 1968. The enemy had gathered a force of sufficient size (approximately seven battalions) with the apparent intent to overrun and occupy, at least temporarily, the air nerve center of South Vietnam. This intention was substantiated by confiscated documents: the enemy battle plan did not call for withdrawal, but directed units to hold until reinforced or issued further instructions.

Reacting to intelligence estimates that some form of enemy action would take place, the Tan Son Nhut security forces conducted a training exercise on 27 January 1968. In the exercise, appropriately nicknamed TET, it was assumed the enemy would attempt to penetrate the western perimeter near Gate 051. This soon proved to be a valid assumption. <sup>4/</sup>

The friendly and enemy forces engaged were: <sup>5/</sup>

<u>FRIENDLY</u>	<u>PERS</u>	<u>ENEMY</u>	<u>EST PERS</u>
Security Police	457	C-10 Sapper Battalion	
Quick Reaction Teams	104	267th VC Battalion	
Reserve Security Police	254	16th VC Battalion	
Task Force 35	90	269th VC Battalion	
TOTAL	905	90th 1st NVA Battalion	
		6th Local Force Battalion	
USA Battalions 4 -----	Unknown	2d Local Force Battalion	
ARVN Battalions 5 -----	Unknown		
Miscellaneous -----	Unknown		
		APPROX TOTAL	3,000

The miscellaneous friendly forces included artillery platoons, Army helicopter Light Fire Teams, C-47 gunships, and various regional and popular forces. Task Force 35 was comprised mainly of the 6th Army Signal Battalion

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members who were stationed at Tan Son Nhut. Enemy battalions contained approximately 450-500 men.

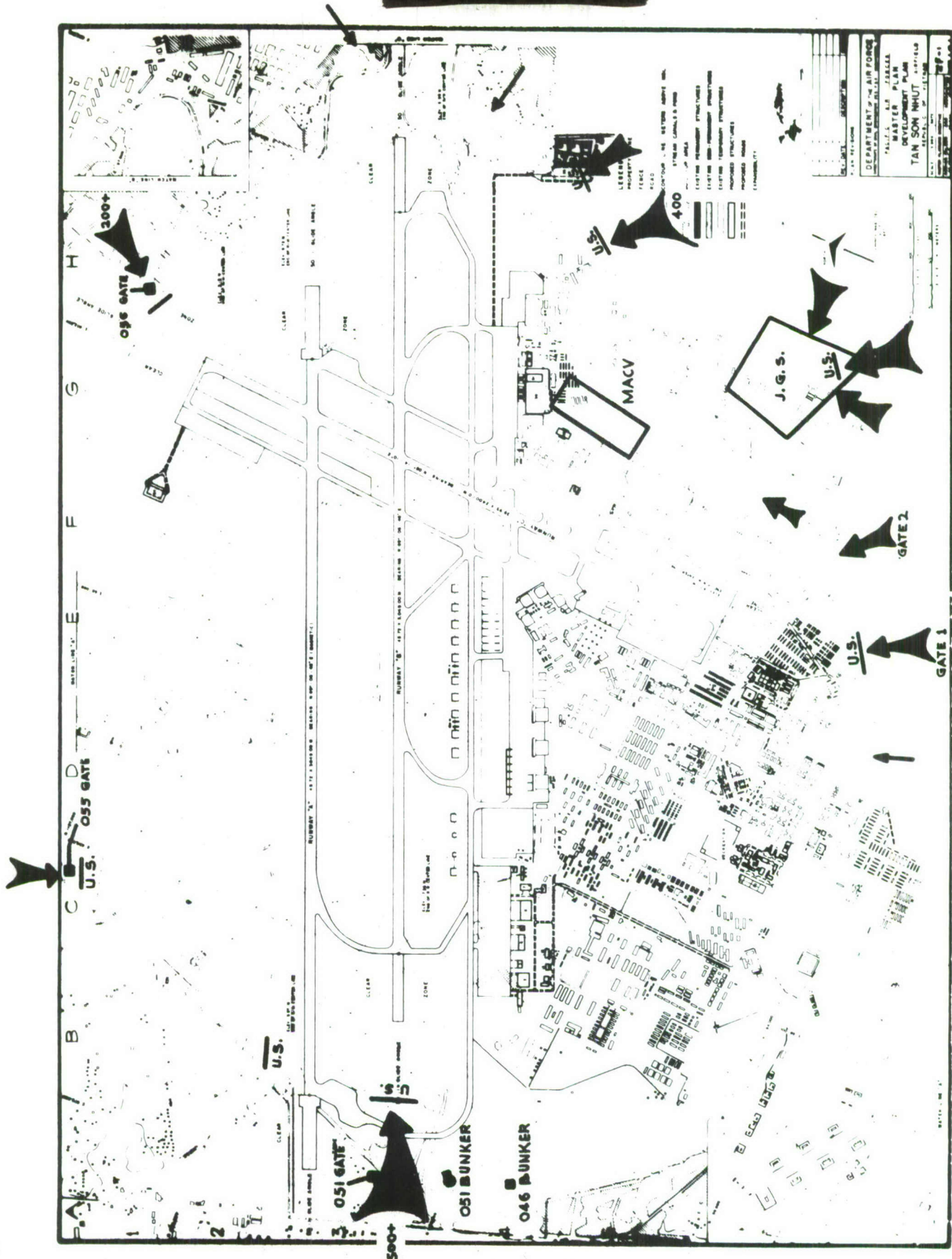
On 31 January 1968, at 0330 hours, the guards on the northern perimeter sounded the alarm that several hundred men were moving west to east. Minutes later, Bunker 051, on the western edge of the installation, reported a large force assaulting the position. Quick Reaction Teams and two platoons of Task Force 35 were immediately dispatched to the area as the initial blocking force.

The 267th VC Battalion, about half of them North Vietnamese, led the assault force into the breach and eventually made the deepest penetration. After a direct mortar hit on Bunker 051, the enemy occupied it and made it a strong point for the attack. Sharp fighting took place near that bunker throughout the night. Meanwhile, enemy pressure was brought to bear around the entire base perimeter. By 0500 hours, there had been ground probes at essentially all of the base gates (Fig. 2), the adjacent Vietnamese Joint General Staff complex, plus MACV Headquarters.

The crest of the VC intrusion was reached at approximately 0530 hours, for by this time they had penetrated the west edge of the base, 600 meters deep and 300 meters wide. <sup>6/</sup>

As daylight approached, Army reinforcements started to arrive, buttressing the base defense force. Their arrival was extremely timely and fortunate. Timely, because an enemy exploitation battalion was right on the heels of the first attackers, with a third battalion in reserve. Fortunate, because for





— U.S. HOLDING LINES

▲ V.C. PROBES  
 Figure 2

← V.C. AUTOMATIC GROUND FIRE

**CONFIDENTIAL**

some unknown reason, a bridge on the outskirts of Saigon was not disabled. Had the bridge been cut, the relief force would have been delayed sufficiently to allow further enemy exploitation, the outcome of which can only be speculated. <sup>7/</sup>

While the defenders cut down the Viet Cong, who had moved through the wire, gunships poured fire on the bulk of the enemy coming up behind, thereby blunting the intensity of the attack. At mid-morning, the enemy initiated another assault accompanied by heavy ground and mortar fire. As it turned out, the objective of this effort was solely to cover withdrawal of the wounded and part of the main force, which were still inside the perimeter. By 1300 hours, the perimeter was secure; however, immediately outside the base heavy fighting continued. Small arms/automatic weapons fire and probing actions continued through 9 February 1968. <sup>8/</sup>

Forward Air Controllers (FACs) kept the enemy engaged during the entire action by adjusting artillery and controlling airstrikes. Of note was the engagement at the VINATEXCO textile factory located northwest of Tan Son Nhut. An U.S. Army unit--the 3/4th Cavalry--reported that it was receiving heavy small arms fire from this factory. Clearance for an airstrike was obtained and the first ordnance was put in by the VNAF 33d Wing, followed by USAF F-100 strikes. Large secondary explosions were observed. A follow-up ground sweep of the factory revealed 95 percent destruction and 170 VC body count. Total VC body count in and around Tan Son Nhut was more than 900. <sup>9/</sup>

Throughout the month of February, no further ground attacks occurred,

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but another menace to the installation appeared at 0100 hours, on 18 February, when the first of thirty 122-mm rockets impacted on the base. By 1 March, six more attacks occurred and in all, one hundred twenty-eight 122-mm rockets and eight 75-mm recoilless rifle rounds landed on the facility.<sup>10/</sup>

During these seven attacks, nine USAF personnel were killed and 102 wounded. Damage was considerable, with seven aircraft destroyed and 75 damaged, plus some facilities and material losses.<sup>11/</sup> (The mortar and rocket threat will be discussed in further detail under passive defense.)

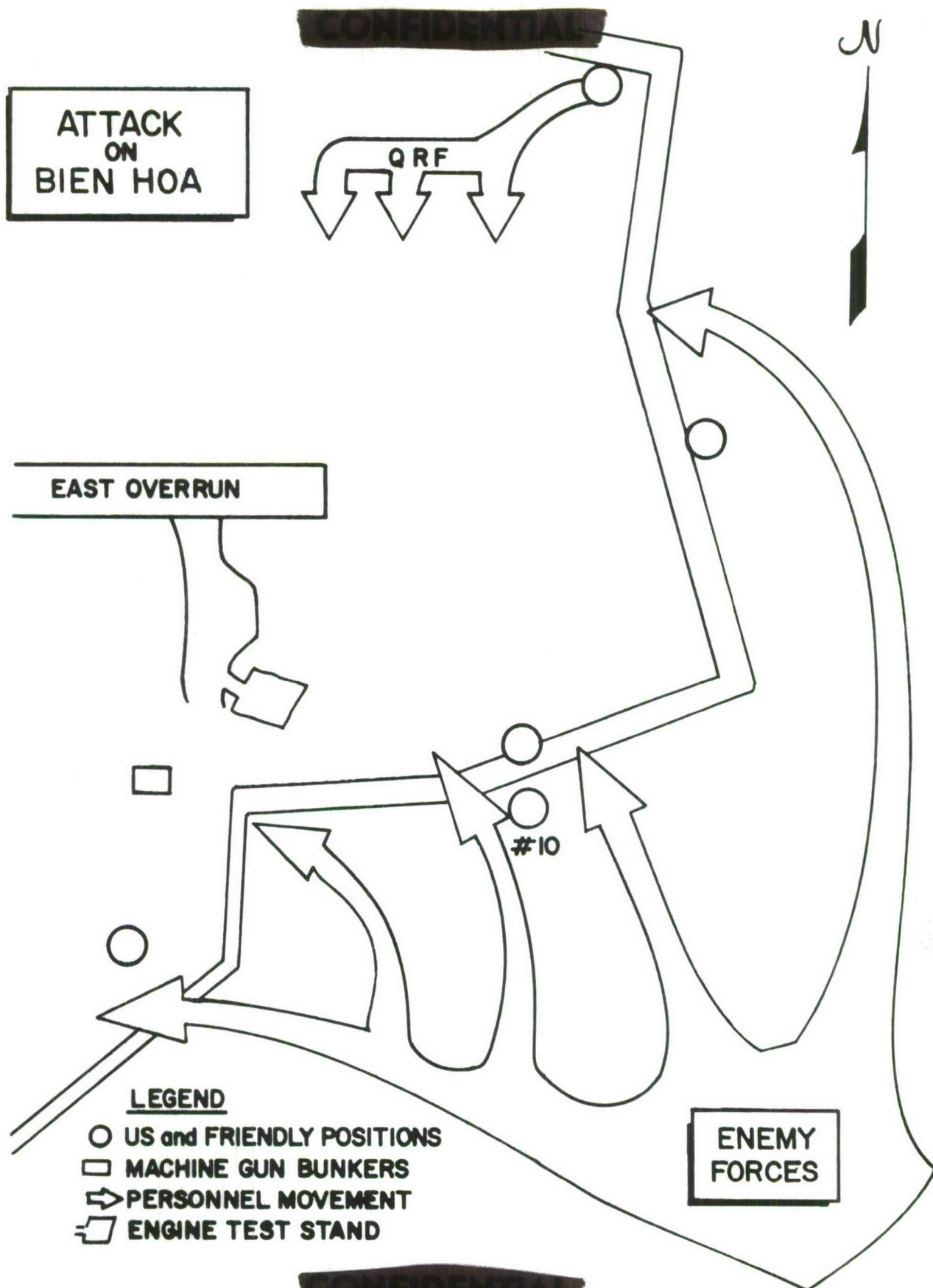
#### Bien Hoa

As in the attack on Tan Son Nhut, post battle intelligence reports indicate the objective of the 31 January 1968 attack was to penetrate and occupy Bien Hoa Air Base.<sup>12/</sup>

Interrogation of prisoners revealed that the 1st and 2d Battalions of the 274th VC Regiment, about 68 percent North Vietnamese, comprised the enemy force. Opposing them were 413 USAF Security Police, VNAF Security Forces, and elements of the 101st Airborne Division.<sup>13/</sup>

At approximately 0300 hours, on 31 January, an estimated 35 rounds of 122-mm rocket fire and 10 rounds of 82-mm mortar fire impacted on the base. The missile attack was followed immediately by a ground assault on the eastern perimeter of the base. The enemy immediately bypassed and surrounded Bunker 10, continued their penetration, and captured the engine test stand along the eastern taxiway. (Fig. 3.) U.S. Army helicopter Light Fire Teams from the 145th Combat Aviation Battalion, supported by AC-47 gunships, were





**CONFIDENTIAL**

Figure 3

**SECRET**

brought to bear on the enemy. The friendly forces halted the advance at the test stand and by dawn proceeded to drive the enemy back. <sup>14/</sup>

By 1640 hours, on 31 January, the enemy was swept off the base but, as with Tan Son Nhut, sniper fire continued sporadically for the next two days. After Action Reports list USAF casualties as 4 KIA and 26 WIA with enemy casualties of 139 KIA (body count) and 25 POWs. Friendly forces in the Bien Hoa area claimed more than 400 enemy KIA. The 3d TFW lost two aircraft and had ten damaged. Facility damage was modest. <sup>15/</sup>

There were no further ground assaults but the communists began a pattern of missile harassment, and struck with a total of 83 rockets on 9, 11, 13, 18, and 28 February. The majority of the rockets were 122-mm with delayed fuzing. The loss due to the rocket attacks was appreciable. There were 12 USAF personnel killed and 91 injured, plus a total of 7 aircraft destroyed and 25 damaged. <sup>16/</sup>

#### Da Nang

As mentioned earlier, Da Nang was struck approximately 24 hours prior to the general assault. It was taken under fire by 122-mm rockets at 0332 hours, on 30 January 1968. A rocket crater temporarily closed the east runway, but the west runway remained open and the facility remained operational. An airborne C-47 sighted a suspected rocket-firing position and the counter-artillery plan was executed, but as happens so often, the results were unknown. In this case, the rocket attack was not followed by a determined ground assault and only light probes were attempted. <sup>17/</sup>

[REDACTED]

On 1 and 3 February 1968, 26 rounds of 122-mm rockets fell on the base, and again on 24 February, 10 rounds of 122-mm hit the air base. <sup>18/</sup>

### Binh Thuy

The southernmost USAF base in Vietnam was under constant attack during the early stages of heightened activity. This relatively vulnerable Delta base, normally subjected to greater harassment than other Vietnam air facilities, underwent ten separate attacks from the opening of the offensive until 18 February 1968. However, no serious ground assault was attempted by the enemy. One aircraft was destroyed and 27 were damaged. <sup>19/</sup>

During and prior to Tet, the VC had launched their missiles at Binh Thuy with relative impunity from the same general area--160 to 190 degrees south of the air base. Airstrikes and ground sweeps south of the base had increased since early February 1968; however, the results of the airstrikes were generally unknown, with the exception of an AC-47 gunship which reported silencing one .50-caliber position. <sup>20/</sup>

The constant state of high alert maintained by Binh Thuy personnel resulted in the following message to Seventh Air Force on 5 February 1968: <sup>21/</sup>  
"Unit mission capability is decreasing rapidly due to the requirement to maintain a constant state of maximum readiness against the threat of a major ground assault." Seventh Air Force implemented Operation Plan COMMANDO <sup>22/</sup>  
ABOVE, and airlifted a 50-man Quick Reaction Mobility Force to that station.



[REDACTED]

### Passive Defense

The rapid buildup and crowding of air installations provided an increasingly lucrative and irresistible target for the Communist forces. Their attacks on air bases ranged from minor sabotage efforts to major incursions inflicting losses of life and materiel. The Tet offensive highlighted limitations in aircraft protection against conventional weapons, particularly rockets and mortars.

The mortar and rocket threat to USAF aircraft became a reality on 30 January 1968, as the increasing tempo of rocket fire, first used at Da Nang AB on 27 February 1967, reached an unacceptable level less than a year later.<sup>23/</sup> This pronounced rocket capability should not have come as a surprise as intelligence estimates continually assessed, and subsequently warned of newer and more sophisticated rockets being infiltrated to South Vietnam.

From 30 January until 29 February 1968, enemy rocket and mortar fire destroyed nine USAF Strike/Recce aircraft. Thirteen Strike/Recce aircraft also sustained major damage and 64 required minor repairs. The lack of adequate shelter was a contributing factor in the loss of these valuable resources. The ARMCO metal bin revetment, in extensive use in SEA, had only served the purpose for expediency and assisted in containing the spread of fires. These 12-foot high earth-filled bins could be rapidly assembled and were relatively inexpensive.<sup>24/</sup> The threat, however, had progressed from the 82-mm mortar to the 122-mm to 140-mm rocket. Also, the possibility of an enemy air attack existed during Tet, as six IL-28 (BEAGLE) light bombers were reported in the southern area of North Vietnam--well within striking

[REDACTED]

range of Tan Son Nhut. At that time, there was concern in the intelligence community that a successful air attack would be of sufficient advantage to Hanoi that an attempt would be made regardless of the high risk. The ARMC0 bin revetment could not withstand an 122-mm rocket, nor could it negate a CBU, napalm or a strafing attack. (Fig. 4.) With the basic assumption that United States' presence would continue in SEA, an immediate and long-term solution was required. New impetus was given to a program to obtain covered shelters.

### Lessons Learned

Comparing the lessons learned by various bases on self defense procedures and requirements during the Tet Offensive with past experience revealed two pertinent facts. First, some lessons were re-learned and second, the large and sustained attacks pointed out new areas requiring action. Lessons re-learned were:

The limitations on an effective defoliation program were again identified as a problem. Previous End of Tour Reports by Security and Law Enforcement officers had continually stressed the need for an extended clear area. <sup>25/</sup> The Tet attack on Bien Hoa served as a case in point: <sup>26/</sup>

*"It has been especially difficult to receive permission from civilian and VNAF authorities to defoliate. Face to face arguments with the Province Chief were necessary as well as lies, threats, etc...The on-base area where a large portion of the VC infiltrated into had been burned a mere eight hours prior to the attack...The grass was six feet high."*

To complement defoliation, a free fire zone of up to 1,000 meters was desired by those responsible for security. However, lack of available real



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Attack on ARMC Bin Revetment

Figure 4





[REDACTED]

estate continued to be a limiting factor.

Reliance upon the RVNAF for base defense was again questioned. In the After Action Report of the Tet Offensive at Bien Hoa, the Chief of Security, 27/ wrote:

*"All security plans and procedures should be taken with complete disregard for VNAF security forces. Past experience has proven they cannot be depended on. This attack verified it...At one guard position all the (Regional Force) guards were asleep...."*

The Chief of Security Police at Tan Son Nhut recorded in his After Action Report: 28/

*"It has been determined from battlefield reports that at the point of penetration some personnel of the 2nd Services Battalion (ARVN) deserted... It is apparent that there is a need for close coordination between Vietnamese and U.S. forces involved in the combined defense of an installation...."*

These two observations echo the report by a U.S. Army Captain, who, in September 1964, was tasked by COMUSMACV to investigate and make recommendations on air base defense. 29/

*"They (ARVN) are lax, poorly trained, and undisciplined. Visual inspections of the posts or bunkers revealed that less than 50% of the post or bunkers had a man in position performing his duty...."*

In all fairness and to complete the record, there were also cases of exemplary and courageous performances among Vietnamese individuals and units. These distinct observations, however, separated by time and space, point to

[REDACTED]

a need for co-manning, by U.S. and Vietnamese, of air base defensive positions.

The most profitable lesson learned was the value of the Quick Reaction (Mobile) Force (QRF). Early during the attacks, security personnel on at least one base soon manifested extreme fatigue. Even if the fatigue was caused by an over-reaction to the threat (over-reaction can only be evaluated in retrospect) the point is still made--the fresh troops bolstered the defense capability and relieved pressure on the beleaguered base. <sup>30/</sup>

As a result of this valuable lesson, Seventh Air Force created a 500-man QRF in place at Phan Rang AB. The contingent, which should have been available during the Tet offensive, was TDY. It was scheduled to be replaced in August 1968 by a permanent Army Ranger-trained, 500-man force. The TDY group was composed of more than 90 percent volunteers, many having previously served a tour in SEA, some as recently as November 1967. Plans called for airlifting this force, with a two-hour reaction time, to any base, either threatened, or actually under attack. <sup>31/</sup>

A large, base-stationed, Quick Reaction Team was also required to halt the enemy at an acceptable distance from priority resources. At Tan Son Nhut, for example, its QRTs were increased from eight teams (13 men each), which were available on Tet to 19 teams on permanent standby in their quarters and available for immediate dispatch. <sup>32/</sup>

Going it alone, at least initially, against a large-scale attack, upgraded security police weapon requirements from light weapons to mortars, rockets launchers, recoilless rifles, and grenade launchers. PACAF approved,



[REDACTED]

and USAF proceeded to acquire 90-mm and 50-caliber weapons. As an interim measure, security forces throughout the theater made use of heavier weapons available from the U.S. Army. <sup>33/</sup>

Ground transportation to move QRTs quickly and safely to areas under attack was mandatory to adequately blunt shock attacks. The use of small armored personnel carriers was also considered. <sup>34/</sup>

More powerful and portable communication systems were also required to alleviate the problem of direct communication with supporting units, such as helicopter Light Fire Teams, AC-47 gunships, flareships, and artillery. <sup>35/</sup>

A gradual crippling of basic support functions on the air bases occurred when local national employees were unable, not permitted, or chose not to report for work. Since heavy dependence was placed on indigenous help for essential activities such as dining halls, sanitation facilities, laundries, and base exchanges, these activities became increasingly difficult to maintain. As the ceiling on U.S. personnel restricted U.S. manning of support activities, cross-training, and self-help planning were required.

The implementation of nightly rocket patrols by FACs over Tan Son Nhut and Bien Hoa had questionable results. A FAC from Bien Hoa stated: <sup>36/</sup>

*"We've been unsuccessful in locating the rockets prior to launching. On the night of the 28th, I flew with the Spooky aircraft along the north of the Dong Nai river. He was dropping flares, I was flying between them and the ground. I observed nothing. We covered the area. At the same time, in the same general location there was an Army Firefly team with a search light*



[REDACTED]

performing visual reconnaissance. Two hours later, at 0100, a rocket came from the same general area that we all three had looked at at 2300. It appears it is impossible to locate a launch position under flares at night. I don't know the reason...."

Conversely, a FAC from Tan Son Nhut who spotted rocket flashes made the following observations. 37/

"However these flashes were a bit larger and after the second one I felt that it must be a rocket attack, against the air base. It's extremely difficult at night to pin-point your position. However, there are reference points in the area in the friendly positions that were well lit, and I could determine in relation to them the approximate position...In order to keep the point of the fire pin-pointed, I did not look at the air base, I kept my eyes on the spot where the fire was coming from and proceeded to it...I then directed Spooky to test fire his weapons at the position and again confirm with the ground units that we would not endanger any of them. We did this, they did confirm that the fire was not on their position and it appeared to be about center of all four of the known reference points around there...In review of the whole sequence of events since the first rocket attack on Tan Son Nhut, this one lasted considerably less than the first one, and it appears that the length of the firing has been shortened in each of the succeeding times, for example, if this rocket attack continued as long as the first one, I feel sure that I and that Spooky expended a good portion of our armament on the rocket position and it would have been much easier for us. But again we cannot make the assumption definite. Although I believe that it had some deterring effect, we cannot make the assumption definitely that my appearance on the scene with Spooky had a definite impact on what the VC did...."

The above opinion was much more optimistic than the average comments given by FACs. The 25th Infantry Division ALO told of his being on the rocket watch one night and spotting their launch site, which he reported. He refused to sanction airstrikes, however, on the coordinates he reported because of the possibility of error. Later that night, ground troops, acting

[REDACTED]

on other information, found the launch site three kilometers south of the ALO's reported position. The ALO, who considered himself fortunate to have a good sense of space relationships, made the comment: <sup>38/</sup>

*"Now I know I speak for the FACs and the aviators that fly in there (Bien Hoa--Tan Son Nhut at night). We just don't feel that we can be that precise to bring down some devastating strikes on possible missile launch sites."*

Regarding Passive Defense, the evidence clearly pointed toward some type of aircraft-covered shelter for an immediate solution--at least for the Strike/Recce fleet. The long-range solution required a multifaceted Program. First, hardening had to be considered for all SEA bases. Second, in concepts evolved from future research and development, consideration must be given to an increase in severity of enemy weapons, including aerial delivery. Finally, all aspects of the protective problem should be incorporated into original planning and designing of future airfields and aircraft. <sup>39/</sup>





### CHAPTER III

#### AIRSTRIKES AROUND THE CITIES

The air bases, with their clearly defined perimeters, proved easier to defend than the cities with their maze of refugee slums bordering the outskirts. Thus, while all the air bases successfully resisted significant incursions, the towns were entered by the enemy, who often fought holding actions against counterattacking allied troops. Between opposing ground forces, the advantage lay with the "defenders"--the VC/NVA--who forced the Allies to conduct search-and-clear operations in house-to-house fighting. Even in outlying villages, where few concrete buildings stood, the advantage lay with the enemy, because many Vietnamese hamlets had bomb shelters dug beneath the houses; and some hamlets, whose inhabitants were sympathetic with the VC, had elaborate bunker-tunnel complexes.

Faced with the enemy's well dug in positions in the cities and towns, the Allies reluctantly resorted to heavy ordnance. Airpower was effective in destroying the buildings in which the enemy chose to hide. Whereas the enemy's heavier arms, such as the rocket propelled grenades (RPGs), often neutralized the allied mechanized armor, the enemy had little defense against air delivered ordnance. Thus, the Army tactics common to the rural operations--fix the enemy, pull back, bring in air--were used in and around the cities to reduce allied troop casualties. "Air" included Army artillery and helicopter gunships (with rockets), Navy offshore guns (in I Corps), and Australian, VNAF, and USAF fighters and gunships. The enemy set fire to parts of some towns and added to the damage by using rockets and mortars, but



[REDACTED]

allied air delivered ordnance also destroyed parts of the towns and cities, especially Hue and Dalat. In the Vietnamese war, where no battle front existed, and the enemy occupied, abandoned, and reoccupied so many villages, the chances for urban destruction increased. Destroying "friendly" villages and towns to root out the enemy was of course not a new situation, but the cumulative damage from a number of offensives such as Tet would soon reach a significant proportion. For instance, the NVA occupied the village of Thon La Chu near Hue during the Tet offensive and brought down airstrikes on the village (Fig. 7). During the heavy fighting of early May 1968, they occupied other villages near Hue, which consequently suffered heavy damage. Rebuilding projects did not keep pace with the accumulating damage, and villagers sought shelter in refugee camps.

#### Tan Hoa

A dilemma for the Air Force was illustrated in a minor way by the total destruction during the early Tet fighting of the small town of Tan Hoa, five kilometers east of the 25th Infantry Division headquarters at Cu Chi. (Fig. 5.) The Division ALO commented on the fighting: <sup>1/</sup>

*"On my first strike that I put in close to Saigon I had a bad feeling because the VC had moved into an area not far east of Cu Chi. The town was a nice little town, a pretty place, very picturesque in fact. I was advised that the province chief had cleared everybody out and we were cleared to attack any place the ground commander directed. The ground commander was on the western side of the town. I'd say he was about 100 to 200 meters into the town moving from west to east. He wanted air strikes put in from the south to the north in front of his troops, with heavy ordnance further to the east where he would be safe from the bomb blast."*

[REDACTED]

*"I must say it was a little difficult to start putting in that kind of ordnance because I realized that before the day was out we were going to make a lot of people homeless. I had to assume that there weren't any friendlies down there or any innocent civilians. I believe there weren't; I'm quite sure there weren't because the civilians assured us that all had been evacuated. However, the VC were in there in great numbers. As I foresaw, within two days that town no longer existed. It's just a big scar on the earth now."*

Army tanks and rocket-equipped gunships also contributed to that destruction, but often only heavy bombs could break down concrete structures and bunkers. As the ALO also pointed out, such towns had "an almost unlimited number of places" which the VC used for sniping positions, and from which they launched RPGs with deadly effectiveness against Army mechanized vehicles. The ground commander, rightly concerned first with his men's safety, requested air support and got the necessary Vietnamese clearance. The Air Force put in the ordnance as directed.

The Air Force airstrikes on the major cities were relatively few, because the defense of the cities was the responsibility of the ARVN supported by the VNAF. However, where American troops were engaged in urban fighting, the Air Force flew close air support missions. These are examples of fighting in the cities:

#### Baria

The city of Baria, province capital of Phouc Tuy, was struck on the morning of 1 February 1968 by an enemy force of approximately 700. Baria was located in III Corps to the southeast of Saigon, and was typical of the smaller province capitals that came under attack during Tet and were



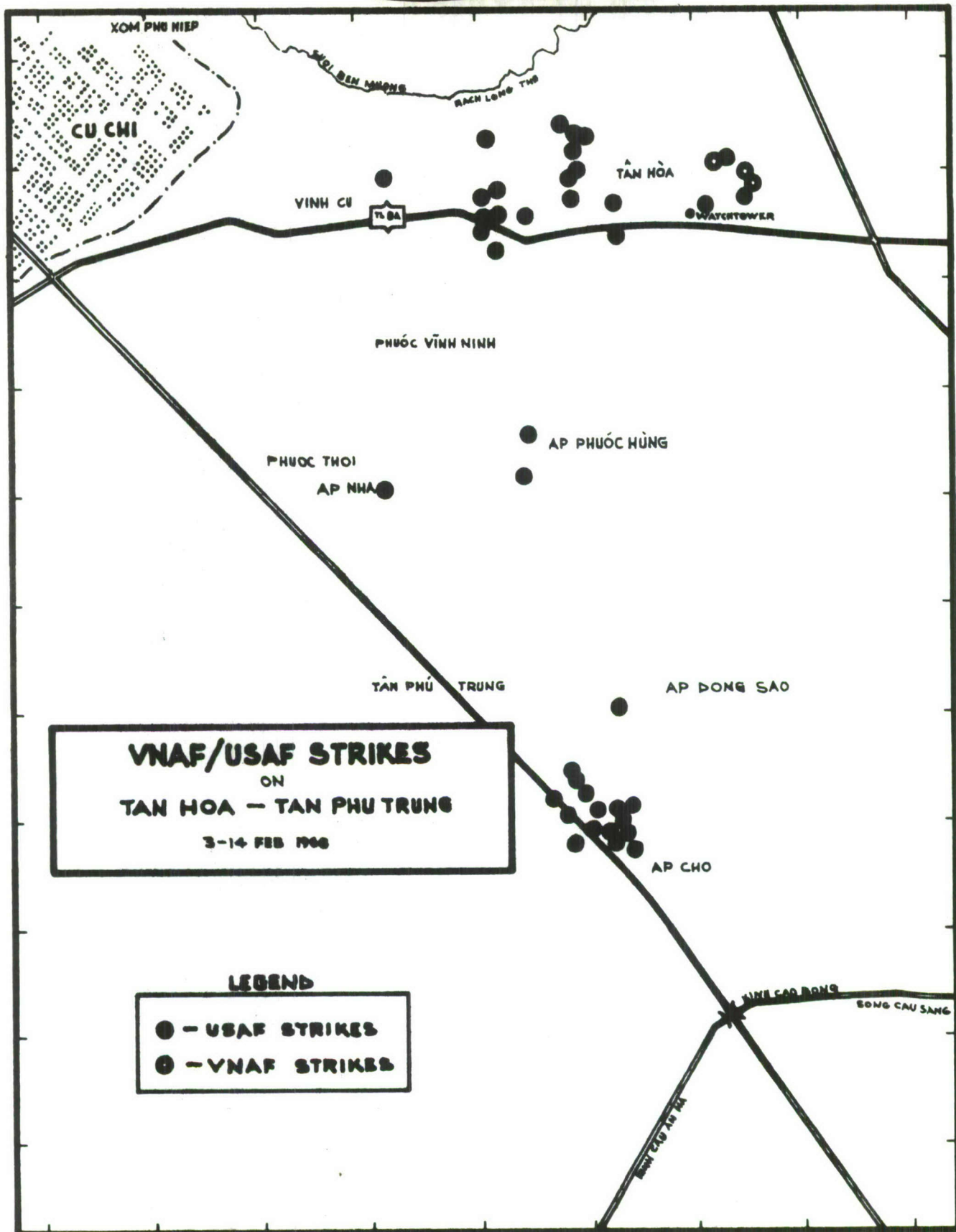


Figure 5

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[REDACTED]

fortunate enough to escape major damage.

The ground units opposing the communists were the 11th ARVN Airborne Battalion and the 4/48th ARVN Infantry Battalion. Air support was provided by FACs from Binh Thuy, Long Khanh, and Bien Hoa Provinces, while U.S. Army helicopter Light Fire Teams and USAF fighters provided eight strikes each. <sup>2/</sup>

The ALO of the 18th ARVN Division at Xuan Loc (just north of Baria) thought that the battle for Baria was particularly heavy: <sup>3/</sup>

*"The Baria area was especially active. They had a lot more activity down there than they've had in all the preceding years of the war, at least since the U.S. has been involved. The VC were led to believe that they could walk in and take over the city."*

The attack was initiated at 0445 hours and the ground forces immediately called for air support. Initial reports, however, were sketchy and all requests for air support were denied. At 0640 hours, with the exception of an O-1 dropping flares, there was no air support and the enemy vanguard was soon reported in the flight line area of the Baria airstrip. The airfield was eventually overrun, and the FACs and aircraft assigned there moved to another location, as it was like going up "Death Valley getting from the compound (living quarters) to the airplane." <sup>4/</sup>

By 0730 hours, the enemy had captured the Korean hospital and was attacking the National Police compound. The first air support to arrive on the scene was an Army helicopter Light Fire Team (LFT) at 0710 hours, followed closely by two more LFTs. At this time, friendly troops were surrounded

[REDACTED]

in the southwest corner of the compound. All the LFTs expended their ordnance on the enemy assault positions and in doing so attracted ground fire, which was directed at both the FACs and LFTs, causing one helicopter to withdraw because of heavy casualties. <sup>5/</sup> The remaining LFTs were very effective in the close in fighting, particularly with their mini-guns. This mini-gun capability, coupled with their quick reaction time, was extremely advantageous. An experienced FAC stated that an Army pilot could get clearance to fire an LFT much more quickly than a FAC could get clearance to expend fixed-wing aircraft, including AC-47 gunships. <sup>6/</sup>

The first fighters that arrived put their heavy ordnance on suspected withdrawal routes and their softer weapons, such as napalm and CBU's, in close proximity to the troops. The pattern was indicative of fixed-wing use in urban fighting throughout the country. It was generally agreed that the fixed-wing had the firepower required for knocking out targets, but the closeness of troops and civilians left little room for error with hard ordnance, thus the heavy reliance on LFTs. However, LFT rocket accuracy was considered poorer than that of fixed-wing aircraft. <sup>7/</sup>

Throughout the day, LFTs, C-47 gunships, and fighters continued striking hostile positions similar to those just described. It was impossible to assist with air near the overrun airstrip, as the U.S. ground advisor to the 11th ARVN Airborne Battalion did not mark friendly positions in spite of repeated requests by the FACs. <sup>8/</sup>

By early afternoon, friendly ground units were moving in and around the town from the west, north, and east. LFTs continued to be directed on small



[REDACTED]

pockets of enemy troops within the city, while fighters were expended primarily on withdrawal routes. Late in the afternoon, a FAC spotted the bulk of the enemy force attempting to withdraw to the north, and subsequently directed four flights of fighters on the avenues of retreat, inflicting heavy enemy casualties. By nightfall, little enemy resistance remained and the airstrip was again in friendly hands. <sup>9/</sup>

In the opinion of the ALO and FACs involved, the capture of a provincial capital was averted by the timely application of airpower, both Army and Air Force. The coordination required between ground and air was accomplished by constant and overlapping FAC coverage during the first 12 hours, and they were called on to simultaneously adjust artillery and direct airstrikes.

Several times during the day, the enemy was clearly visible but no firepower from helicopters or fighters was available. Friendly casualties were light with 39 KIA and 105 WIA. The effectiveness of air was unmistakable-- of 355 enemy KIA, 215 were attributed by air. <sup>10/</sup>

#### Hue

Unlike the struggles in other major cities throughout South Vietnam, the battle for Hue was protracted, lasting from 31 January to the end of February. The month-long contest within the city was characterized by close house-to-house combat, involving, at its peak, three U.S. Marine battalions, elements of the U.S. Cavalry Division, and 11 ARVN battalions. These friendly units were pitted against the 6th NVA Regiment comprised of eight NVA/VC Battalions. <sup>11/</sup>

The enemy realized that this attempt to seize and hold Hue might result

[REDACTED]

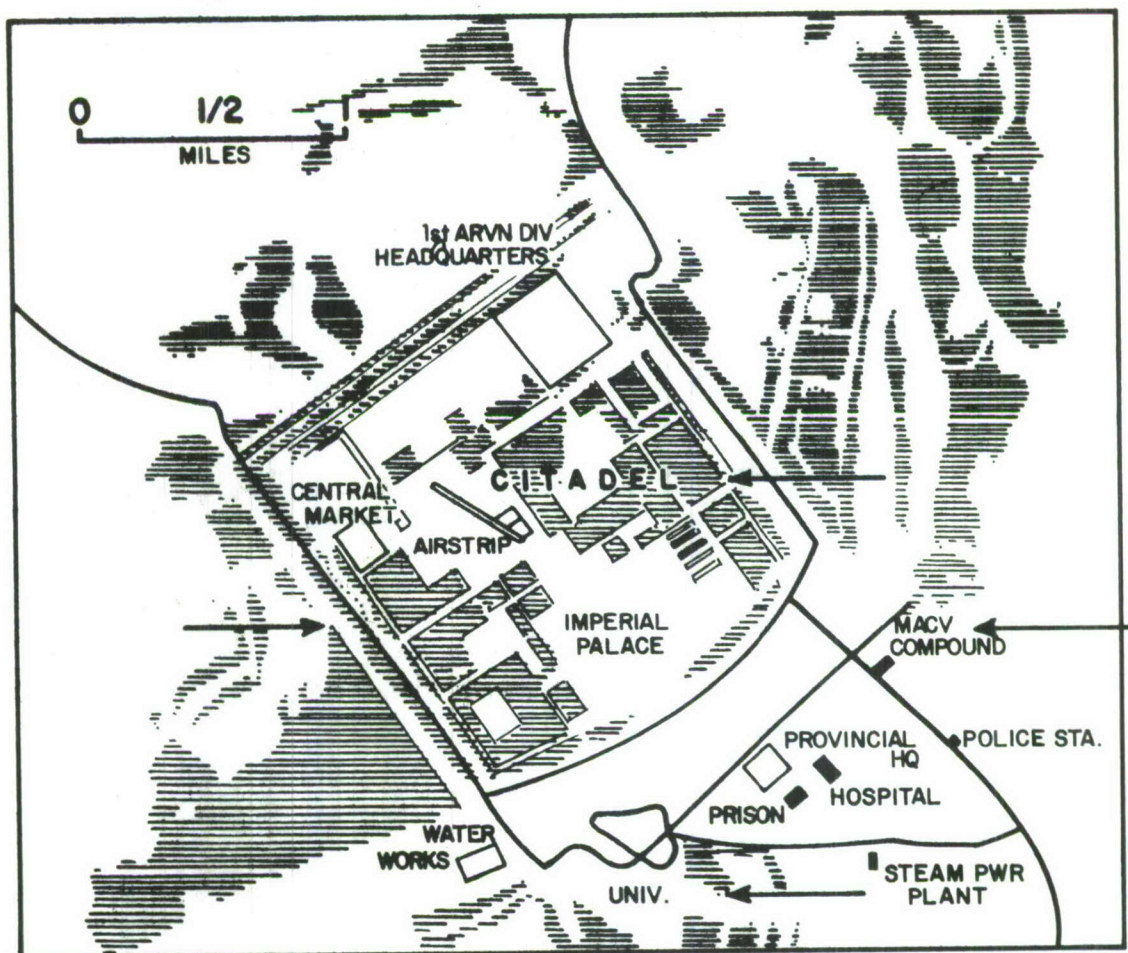
in the destruction of the cultural and religious center of the nation, but the great propaganda value to be accrued, outweighed the almost certain destruction of the city. Timing their assault to coincide with the holiday leave of the bulk of the ARVN troops and National Police, the communists achieved complete tactical surprise. <sup>12/</sup>

In a matter of hours, after the early morning opening volleys, the enemy controlled the area south of the city (which contained the MACV compound), the University of Hue, the Citadel, and a heavily-populated residential area. U.S. Marines arrived on the scene (Fig. 6) at 0830 hours on 31 January and proceeded to clear the area around the MACV compound, securing it by dark. <sup>13/</sup>

The defense of Hue was a Vietnamese responsibility and Lieutenant General Lam, the ARVN Commander, intended initially to recapture the city, using solely ARVN units. As the situation progressed, however, it soon became apparent that the strength of enemy forces was such that their expulsion would require outside assistance--the enemy had clearly come to stay. Battle forces of the ARVN and U.S. Marines gradually increased and soon steady progress was made against a heavily-entrenched enemy. Eventually, friendly forces were obliged to assault house-by-house and block-by-block in a locale foreign to their normal combat environment. <sup>14/</sup>

A factor which limited the rate of advance was the initial restriction on employment of certain supporting arms. The desire to reduce injury to noncombatants, coupled with the Vietnamese request to minimize destruction





ATTACK AREAS at HUE

Figure 6

[REDACTED]

within the city, precluded the use of artillery, bombs, and napalm, but by late evening on 3 February, all supporting arms restrictions were removed south of the river. The expected relief was not forthcoming, as the combination of close combat and poor weather prevented effective air support. In fact, the fire supporting arm affected most by weather throughout the battle of Hue, was air. Morning and evening fog, intermittent rain, and almost constant overcast curtailed the employment of fighter and reconnaissance aircraft. <sup>15/</sup>

As a result of the general adverse meteorological conditions, many of the airstrikes were flown at night, which was the best time for good weather. Night strikes and radar bombing (COMBAT SKYSPOT) characterized a great deal of the air effort with COMBAT SKYSPOT controlling 48 sorties, both Marine and Air Force, which was nearly half of the total strikes flown. Most of the radar-directed bombs fell (Fig. 7) to the west of the city proper. <sup>16/</sup>

Despite these limitations on air, ground troops made steady progress, and by 9 February reclaimed south Hue. The enemy had taken heavy losses, but fresh units continued to infiltrate the city. Also, civilians were pressed into service by the enemy, and armed local cadre wearing red arm bands facilitated movements of nonlocal hostiles through the alleys and courtyards of the residential areas. <sup>17/</sup>

On 22 February, General Lam, who had first authorized bombing within the Citadel on the 5th, was required to order airstrikes against the Imperial Palace--the "Throne of Kings", as it had become evident further infantry



[REDACTED]

assaults would result in prohibitive friendly casualties. After heavy air support, the Vietnamese Black Panther Company successfully assaulted and seized the Imperial Palace on the afternoon of 24 February. The remaining enemy units were soon caught in a vise and quickly eliminated. By 25 February, the Citadel was declared secure and control of the city of Hue was returned to the government of Vietnam. 18/

The entire Marine fighter effort was from the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing, which flew a total of 48 attack sorties, 40 of which were in close support of ground troops. Fixed-wing aircraft were also utilized for aerial broadcasts directing civilians to places of safety. 19/

The USAF flew a total of 90 strike sorties directly in support of operations at Hue between 2 and 27 February, of which all but one were immediates. The sole preplanned sortie flown on 14 February, was directed on the 6th NVA Regiment Headquarters, two kilometers west of town. Until 10 February, the battle damage assessments by air were generally reported unknown. Air support of troops-in-contact began for the first time on 14 February, and it was then that first reports were received of enemy troops killed by air. Also, destroyed and damaged structures appeared for the first time on that day and were continually reported on virtually every subsequent mission. By the end of February, USAF airstrikes had accounted for 36 enemy KBA and 129 structures, either damaged or destroyed. 20/

The enemy lost more than 5,000 killed and 89 captured. Friendly losses were 140 Marines and U.S. Army troops KIA and 857 WIA, with 384 ARVN KIA and

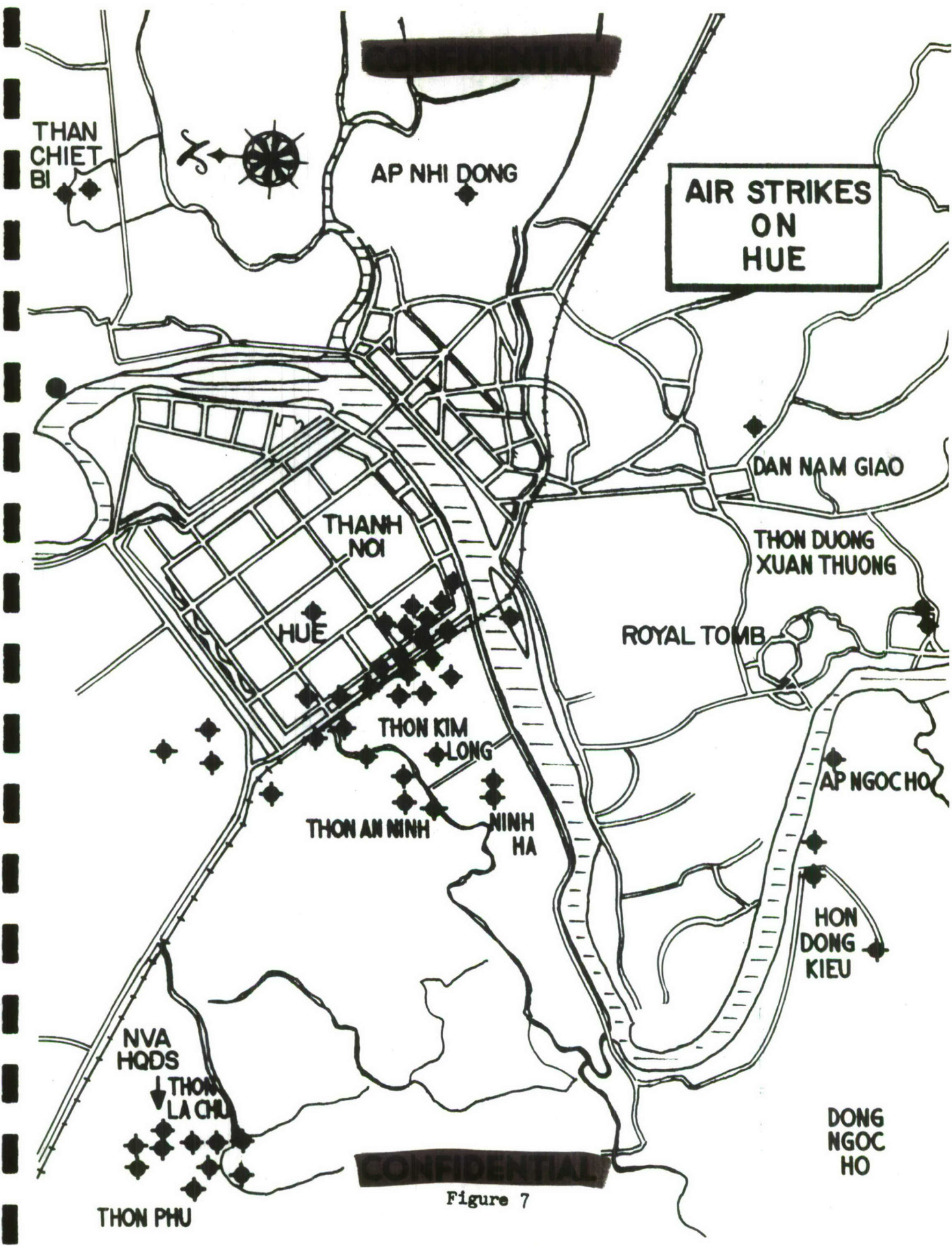


Figure 7



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1,800 WIA. <sup>21/</sup>

The following summary of a confiscated enemy document, classified by the enemy as "Absolute Secret", shed some interesting light on the battle for Hue. According to the document, the attack on Hue had been planned as a separate operation to be conducted in March 1968, but the NVA party committee decided to launch the attack during Tet, due to the opportunity of the situation. The assigned Communist forces had 20 days preparation beginning on 7 January 1968, and during this time conducted 26 attack exercises. <sup>22/</sup> Their mission was to annihilate the ARVN administrative and intelligence personnel and induce the local population to revolt.

Prior to the attack, civilians were infiltrated into the city to test the government's efficiency of control, while at the same time a movement to assassinate local officials (outside Hue) and ambush vehicles on the Da Nang--Hue highway was begun. The enemy also occupied a number of district seats and conducted fire attacks on Phu Bai Airfield. After overrunning the Free World Forces installations, Communist forces occupied Hue for 25 days. During this period, they staged several demonstrations with the participation of a large number of city dwellers. On 18 February, they set up a "Coalition Front for Peace".

Communist reports of their withdrawal from Hue leave out their losses or details of troop deployment; however, numbers involved and timing approximately coincided with the U.S. Marine After Action Report. Communist claims of Free World Forces killed or captured, plus equipment destroyed were, as

[REDACTED]

usual, greatly exaggerated. For example, they claimed 250 aircraft were burned and 52 "warships" were destroyed.

### Dalat

Although intelligence indicated that an attack was imminent on Tuyen Duc Province, it was believed the VC were mobilizing their forces for an attack on Duc Trong District Headquarters and not on Dalat. Therefore, there was no general increase in readiness posture. The fact that Dalat had not been assaulted during the entire 22 years of war in Vietnam had undoubtedly lulled the inhabitants into a false sense of security, and at the time of the attack, there was no current area defense plan in existence.<sup>24/</sup>

The Offensive, which was to last for 11 days, began at 0200 hours on 1 February by an estimated VC company. Shortly afterward, the enemy made coordinated mortar and ground attacks against the Cam Ly Airfield, Sector Headquarters, and an MP villa. A Reaction Force, supported by gunships, was dispatched by the Province Chief. This force prevented any overrun, and by late that day had driven the enemy back to their previously established strong points on the western edge of the city.<sup>25/</sup>

On 2 February, the 145th VC Battalion assembled in the cemetery, firing into Regional Forces located 500 meters to the southeast. Two airstrikes called in terminated the enemy's desire for action the remainder of that day. Contact was light on the third and fourth days, culminating in a near stalemate as Communist troops retreated to the high ground, thereby bogging down friendly repulsion efforts. At this stage, the VC had six effective fighting companies and the ARVN had seven. On the fifth day, the 23d ARVN



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Ranger Battalion arrived to reinforce the province troops, but positions remained static until 8 February, when intelligence reports indicated that the enemy was conducting limited withdrawal operations. On 9 February, friendly forces conducted a frontal attack, but this, too, was halted, even though repeated air and artillery support was called in. This was the heaviest day of airstrikes as 16 VNAF A-1H sorties and two each F-4C and F-100 sorties were flown. All airstrikes were within city limits. On 10 February, the 11th ARVN Ranger Battalion and the 2d ARVN Ranger Group arrived and joined the fray with the existing force by conducting another frontal assault. Again, gains were limited, though tactical air and artillery saturated the area. A tactical airstrike and heavy artillery were repeated again on the 11th, but the enemy fought a stubborn withdrawal. By the end of the day, most VC forces had withdrawn and only occasional sniper fire was reported throughout the city. On the 12th, a VC base camp, which was being used as an assembly area for the withdrawing enemy, was located and six F-100 sorties struck, destroying 14 structures. <sup>26/</sup>

In addition to the 23d ARVN Division Command Post, there were three separate and distinct Tactical Operations Centers (TOCs) in operation. During the Dalat battle, each TOC was responsive to different chains of command, which were: (1) the Mayor of Dalat; (2) the Province Chief; (3) the Superintendent of the Vietnamese Military Academy. Coordination procedures were intricate and complicated. Rarely did one force know what the other was doing. Thus control of air and artillery strikes was difficult and time consuming. <sup>27/</sup>

A total of 47 USAF airstrikes were flown in support of the ground forces.

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All strikes were either in or near the city, with a total of 111 enemy KBAs attributable to air, and 122 structures either damaged or destroyed. Even though the battle lasted 11 days, 44 out of the 47 airstrikes were immediates. The three preplanned strikes were scheduled and flown against a VC base camp on 12 February--the day after the city was declared secure. (Fig. 8.)

The first VNAF strike was not flown until 8 February, when three A-1Hs struck the southern edge of the city. The bulk of the VNAF effort came on 9 February, when 16 A-1Hs struck deep within the city limits, approximately due east of the airfield. (Fig. 8.) A total of 27 VNAF strike sorties were flown, all well within the city limits; they were accredited with 10 KBA and 76 structures, either destroyed or damaged. At the time of the attack on Dalat, a VNAF A-1H squadron at Nha Trang, the closest VNAF base in II Corps, was in the process of converting to another aircraft. This may have contributed to their low sortie rate, particularly in the opening phase. <sup>28/</sup>

#### IV Corps

Commencing at 0230 hours on 31 January, and extending for a period of 48 hours, 13 of 16 province capitals in IV Corps were struck by the communists. Some of these were occupied. On 3 February, Cao Lin, one of the remaining cities, was mortared in the early morning, but no ground attack occurred. At 1000 hours the same day, ARVN units trapped an estimated 300-man force on the outskirts of the city. Airstrikes and gunships were called in and an estimated 200 VC were killed. <sup>29/</sup>

A determined effort was made by the VC to take Can Tho city and Can Tho Airfield, with heavy fighting raging there until 5 February, when the VC

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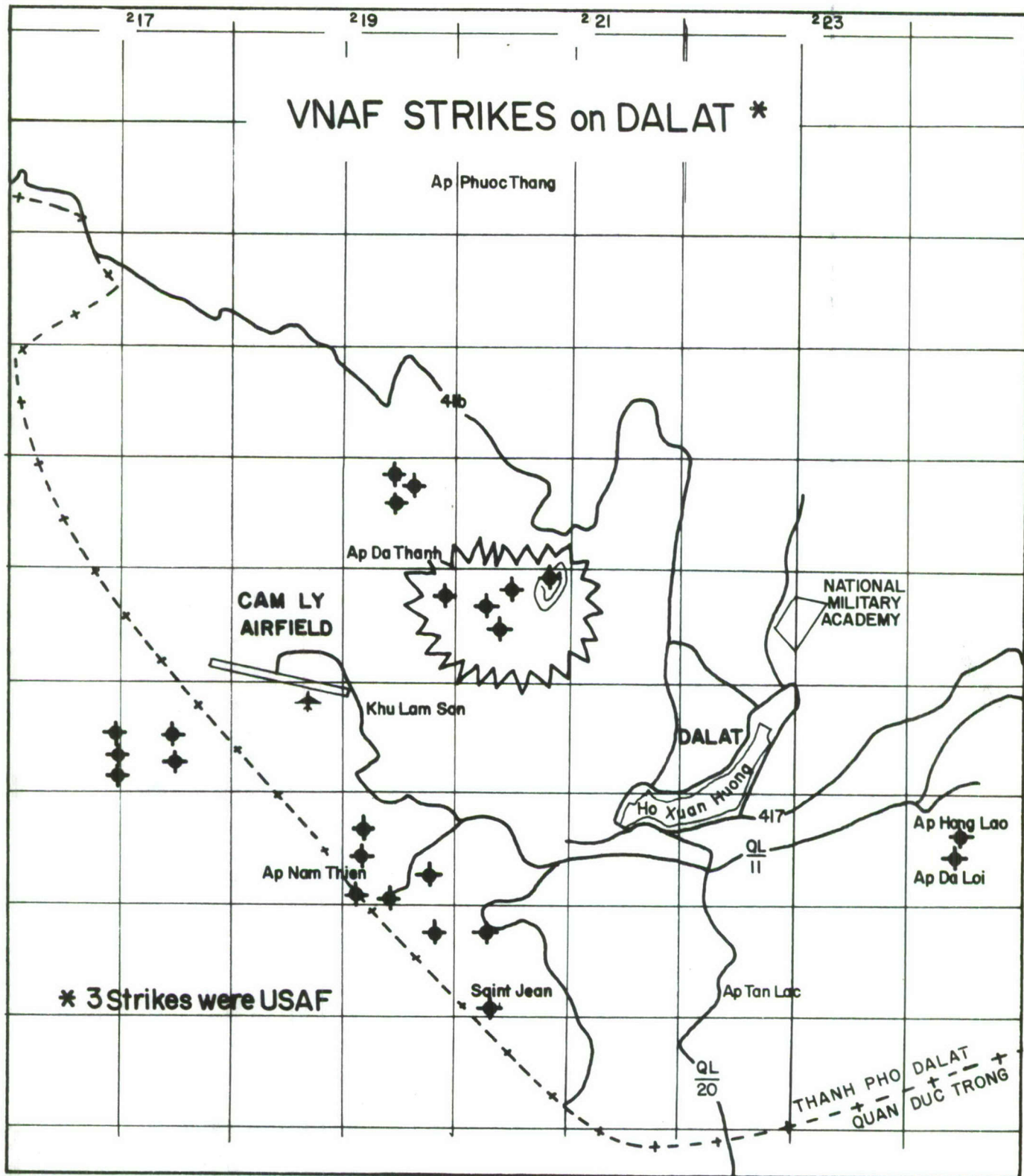


Figure 8

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forces were finally routed out of the Can Tho University. From that day until well into April, sharp fighting took place west of the city. The enemy seemed determined to remain and harass Can Tho and Binh Thuy Airfields. The government's success in repelling the communists was seriously marred by two factors. One was the widespread looting that took place there and in other provinces. The other was the opinion of some reputable citizens that the loss of life and destruction of property, in some instances, was unnecessary. Perhaps the most definite example of this adverse reaction was the bombing of the university at Can Tho. Most informed residents of the city felt the destruction of the university was wrong. 30/

Ben Tre was infiltrated the evening of 30 January, and fighting started at 0300 hours on 31 January. Two battalions of VC occupied key locations near ARVN and U.S. locations. Mortar and ground attacks were to pound the city for two and a half days. 31/

At the time of the attack, two battalions of the 1st Brigade, 7th ARVN Division, were in Ben Tre. When it became apparent that overrun was imminent, the 3d Brigade, 9th Infantry Division, including the ALO-FAC element, was moved to the area. The 3d Brigade was immediately inserted into the downtown area, because the only section not under VC control at the time was an U.S. compound composed of 70-80 people and a few ARVN. Almost immediately the brigade was pinned down and sustained 16 KIA. At this point, the ground commander, realizing the seriousness of his predicament, attempted to pull back and called for air delivered ordnance. The FAC controlling the initial

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strikes made the following observation: <sup>32/</sup>

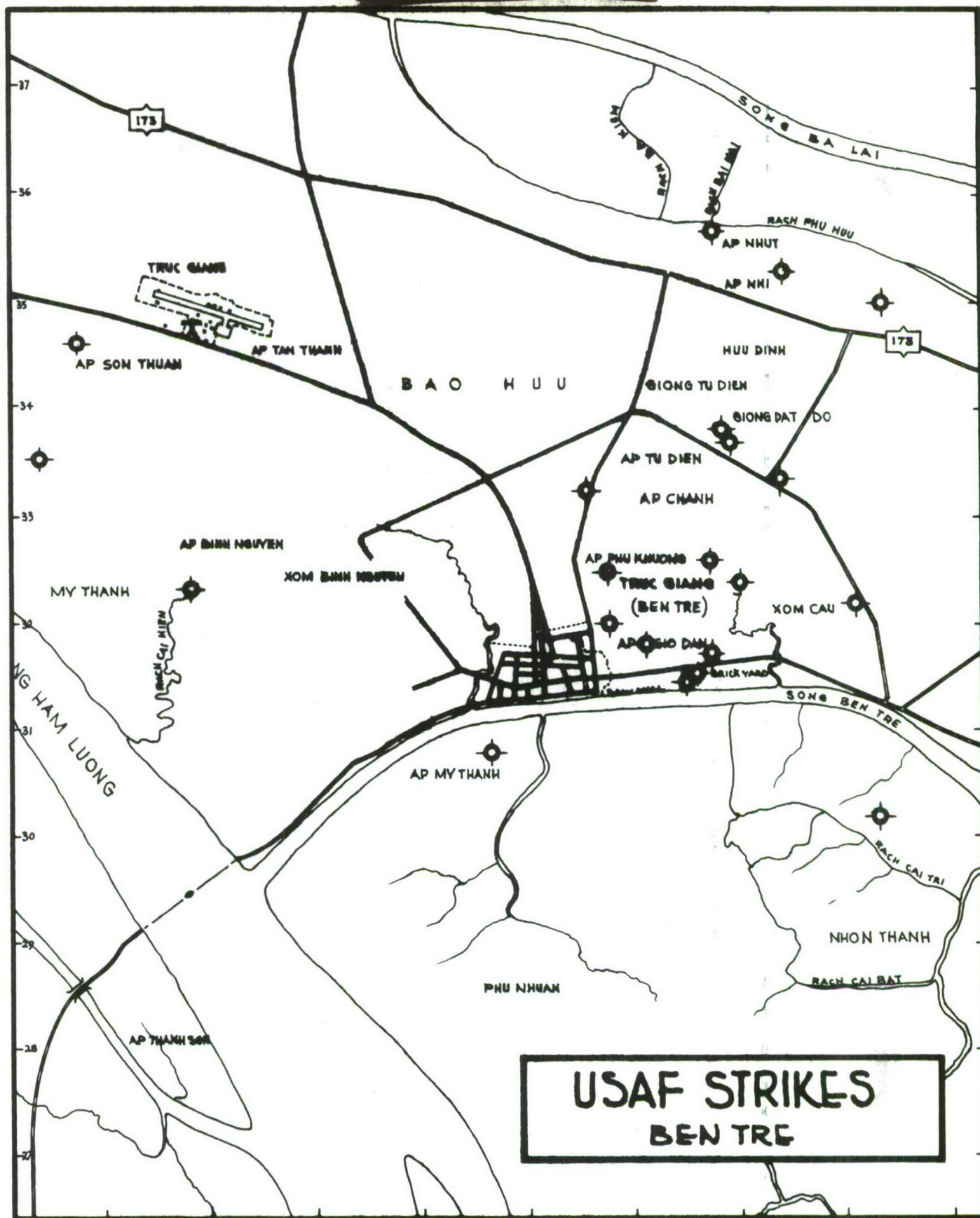
*"The way we selected these targets was determined by the VC. They chose the battleground and we really had no choice where we put the target. There were American soldiers lying dead on the road and there were going to be a lot more if we didn't put ordnance-(air) into the town. The choice for putting (air) ordnance into the town--as for putting all ordnance in--was the Brigade commander's and I think he made a wise decision in the situation because without air delivery they would have been pretty well wiped out."*

Airstrikes were generally put into the eastern portion of the city (Fig. 9) with seven sorties going into an eight-block area. <sup>33/</sup> This air killed the VC drive in that portion of the city and forced them into the open, with many running across open rice fields. The FACs directed artillery, gunships, and fixed-wing strikes on the fleeing enemy. <sup>34/</sup>

The allied forces gradually gained the upper hand and by nightfall on 2 February, fighting subsided, with search-and-clear operations beginning the following morning. During 3 and 4 February, sporadic contact was made with VC units, but the danger to the city gradually diminished after the initial onslaught. <sup>35/</sup>

Ben Tre suffered major damage, most of it through burning before the arrival of the 3d Brigade and subsequent airstrikes. More than 30,000 refugees were generated, with an estimated 5,000 homes destroyed. Large areas around this province capital were considered insecure, and consequently many of the people who left were afraid to return. Civilian casualties were estimated at 455 killed and 784 wounded. <sup>36/</sup>

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**Figure 9**

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A significant observation under lessons learned was that IV Corps Advisors, in their After Action Report, echoed a plea made in other Corps: major population centers should have defense and counterattack plans. <sup>37/</sup>

Also noteworthy was the effect the Tet Offensive had on the Revolutionary Development Program (RDP) in IV Corps. Extensive damage was done to a great portion of the provincial urban areas by friendly forces in their efforts to dislodge VC elements from these population centers. During the final half of February, RDP, U.S., and GVN officials were assessing the degree of remodeling to include in the 1968 plans. It would vary from drastic in some, to no change in others. <sup>38/</sup>

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## CHAPTER IV

### AIRLIFT

When the Tet Offensive began in the early morning hours of 31 January, the responsiveness of the tactical airlift system to surging tactical requirements was severely challenged. Military installations as well as cities and hamlets were under simultaneous attack throughout the country. At Tan Son Nhut, it was necessary to evacuate and disperse all flyable C-123s and those C-130s that could not be revetted. The resulting beddown of aircraft away from the major cargo generation and receiving points, and the inaccessibility to many airheads, cost the tactical airlift system an estimated 30 percent of its normal capability for several days, based on December productivity.<sup>1/</sup> Aircraft often had to be diverted to other locations as they would arrive at destinations only to find them under attack.

As the tempo of activity increased, the enemy cut the land lines of communications, making tactical airlift the only means of transporting troops and materials to many hotly contested areas. For instance, within three hours of the initial attack on Tan Son Nhut and Saigon, elements of the ARVN Marines were transported from Vung Tau and airlanded into the midst of heavy fighting, an act that assisted in preventing Tan Son Nhut from being overrun.<sup>2/</sup> Later, entire units and their equipment and supplies, which normally traveled by surface, were airlifted from Hue to Quang Tri, a distance of 20 miles, and from Tan Son Nhut to Duc Hoa, only 10 miles.<sup>3/</sup> Tactical airlift, in essence, became the lifeline of support for combat operations, but not without



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considerable disruption to the common service airlift system and the normal resupply mission, as well as to the MACV priority system.

Disruption of normal resupply missions, to respond to the surge requirements, created an upgrading of emergency requests, causing cargo backlogs. Unfilled routine requirements became emergency requests, taxing the priority system with unrealistic required delivery dates, which further disrupted normal operations, until routine scheduled missions essentially ceased. This partial breakdown lasted through February, when the arbitrary resumption of scheduled runs (recommended by an ad hoc committee representing ALCC and MACV, TMA, J-45, and COC), relieved the situation and normal operations were resumed.

The Southeast Asia tactical airlift system has the capability to provide for surge requirements by bringing C-130s from an offshore base to operate in RVN. For months prior to Tet, expanding requirements had resulted in a gradual, but sizable, increase in the C-130 fleet. During the first five months of 1967, the 315th Air Division at Tachikawa, Japan, was obligated to provide 44 airframes daily. From May 1967 to January 1968, the average number of C-130s available in-country gradually climbed from 44 to 73, while C-130 tonnage rose from 57,304 to 75,142. <sup>4/</sup>

Saturation of in-country existing facilities was estimated to occur at 52 to 54 aircraft, with support facilities existing in RVN in late 1967. <sup>5/</sup> Although a constant effort was being made to improve the quality and quantity of support, inevitably parking areas became overcrowded, in-country maintenance was delayed, and the Airlift Control Center (ALCC) had to manage more

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aircraft than it was manned to control. Insufficient manning and equipment hampered others, such as the 2d Aerial Port Group. The Group reported itself manned for 44 aircraft and thus was 445 personnel spaces short in December to handle the 66 C-130s then in country. <sup>6/</sup>

These increased demands for tactical airlift's limited resources emphasized something well-known for a long time. That is, when airlifting in a hostile tactical environment, a capability for surging requirements must be maintained. There are times during the so called "lull" periods when redundant facilities--ramp space, equipment, communications, and even personnel appear to be a waste. Accordingly, the buildup in Vietnam, outpaced each of these items. When tactical airlift was faced with the Tet lunar contingency and its subsequent demands for airlift, it was found that calling additional aircraft and personnel into Vietnam was not enough; facilities, beddown space, adequate command and control equipment, and personnel were lacking.

As the expanding inventory overtaxed available facilities, the efficient use of airframes prior to Tet dropped as flying hours per aircraft increased and sorties per aircraft declined. In short, as an 834th Air Division study explained, after a certain point (between 52 - 56 aircraft) each additional C-130 brought a somewhat decreased capability. <sup>7/</sup> With fairly static maintenance, managerial and support facilities, and personnel, each additional C-130 would then further decrease the efficiency of the fleet, although adding to the total haulage capacity. Such diminishing returns were apparent by the end of 1967. Efficiency cannot be the major yardstick, however, for determining



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effectiveness in a Tet situation.

The real key to tactical airlift effectiveness in abrupt, high density, rapidly-shifting ground tactical combat operations is the timely response of the system to move troops and equipment into combat and at a moment's notice to check and counter enemy actions regardless of how disrupting this might be to normal operations. Thus airlift response and the reliability of that response to the surging tactical emergencies and emergency resupply priorities, should be the uppermost measures of total airlift effectiveness. Although responsiveness of the available resources is difficult to quantify, the conclusion is apparent that airlift met the test of responsiveness in a combat environment. There is no recorded instance of a failure to move troops on demand, or of combat plans being discarded, because tactical airlift could not respond--even at the height of Tet hostilities.

The following list of indices depicts the statistical profile of C-130 productivity from September 1967 - February 1968: <sup>8/</sup>

<u>MONTH</u>	<u>Nr of C-130s Utilized</u>	<u>Flying Hrs Per Acft</u>	<u>Sorties Per Acft</u>	<u>Flying Time Per Sortie</u>	<u>Tons Per Sortie</u>	<u>Total Tons Per Acft</u>
Sep	56	133.8	186.8	0:44	6.02	1,106.6
Oct	61	137.5	182.8	0:45	6.37	1,173.5
Nov	64	138.4	176.9	0:44	6.70	1,001.0
Dec	66	135.9	176.9	0:46	6.11	1,079.8
Jan	73	144.2	176.3	0:49	5.85	1,029.3
Feb	84	137.8	143.1	0:58	5.92	845.1

This comparison illustrates the decline of sorties and tonnage per C-130 aircraft, a reflection of the decreased efficiency previously noted as additional C-130s joined the fleet. Tons per sorties, however, reflect only a slight

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decrease between September and February. Even in December, with 66 aircraft in country, tons per sortie were well above figures for September, when only 56 aircraft were in RVN. The decrease in sorties flown per aircraft should be considered jointly with the more than 30 percent increase in flying time per sortie between September and February. This sharp increase in flying time per sortie is a direct result of the countless long-haul missions to I CTZ throughout the Tet Offensive. A final point to consider when analyzing these figures is that unit moves of troops and equipment traditionally carry less tonnage per sortie than normal resupply missions from port to port. On unit moves, the aircraft usually bulk out with troops or vehicles before they gross out in maximum allowable load. The many unit moves during Tet account for a considerable portion of the decrease in total tons per aircraft, as well as the decrease in sorties flown.

Crowded facilities also affected the C-123 operations, although the major cause for a decline in total tonnage in the last half of 1967 came from moving the 315th Air Commando Wing and three squadrons to Phan Rang. That base did not generate major cargo tonnage, thus requiring more nonproductive positioning sorties. This was especially disadvantageous when a major <sup>9/</sup> shift toward ground operations occurred in I Corps in January 1968.

By mid-January, the North Vietnamese Army infiltration of northern I Corps brought a counter-U.S. buildup. On 21 January, the airlift to the Khe Sanh combat base began, causing an immediate and severe strain on the airlift system. In the first 15 days of the month, the daily total cargo available (on hand and promised) averaged less than 6,000 tons, the desired



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level of a two-day backlog. Cargo tonnage awaiting shipment for more than seven days averaged less than three percent of the total backlogged cargo actually on hand at the various aerial ports. <sup>10/</sup>

Khe Sanh and the I Corps buildup brought a rapid change. By 29 January, total available tonnage reached 9,400, backlogged cargo on hand was double the average of the first 15 days of the month, and the percent of cargo more than seven days old was 22 percent. Thus, on the eve of Tet, the airlift was already in a surge effort and saturated. <sup>11/</sup> (Appendix II.)

On 30 January--the beginning of Tet--the in-country airlift moved nearly 3,500 tons, essentially the daily average for the last quarter of 1967. By the next day, the heavy fighting around Tan Son Nhut and eight other major airfields curtailed operations significantly and only 2,023 tons were moved. A rash of emergency airlift requests also disrupted normal schedules, preventing the full tonnage utilization of airframes. The following statistics detail the daily tons moved by each type of aircraft and provide the daily average for the last quarter of 1967 as a basis for comparisons: <sup>12/</sup>

<u>Date</u>	<u>C-7</u>	<u>C-123</u>	<u>C-130</u>	<u>Total</u>
Oct-Dec 1967	600	665	2,319	3,584
30 Jan 68	490	609	2,349	3,448
31 Jan 68	233	495	1,295	2,023
1 Feb 68	442	509	1,952	2,903
2 Feb 68	492	613	1,898	3,003
3 Feb 68	548	671	2,410	3,629
4 Feb 68	626	752	2,298	3,676
5 Feb 68	643	717	2,287	3,647
6 Feb 68	639	805	1,887	3,331
7 Feb 68	610	867	2,355	3,832
8 Feb 68	695	751	2,632	4,078
9 Feb 68	609	1,015	2,646	4,270

[REDACTED]

The number of passengers moved and sorties flown followed the same trend-- a sharp drop at the start of the Tet Offensive, and a recovery within four days. Thus the important index of sorties flown by all three types of aircraft was as follows: <sup>13/</sup>

<u>Sorties Flown</u>	<u>C-7</u>	<u>C-123</u>	<u>C-130</u>	<u>Total</u>
30 Jan	368	238	412	1,018
31 Jan	183	186	256	625
1 Feb	345	205	337	887
2 Feb	380	257	359	996
3 Feb	386	266	379	1,031

Much of the initial loss of productivity stemmed from the heavy fighting at Tan Son Nhut. On the night of the 30th, all C-130 crews (who were billeted in two Saigon hotels) came on base as a precaution against a possible enemy attack on their billets. When Tan Son Nhut reopened on 31 January for aircraft operations, the C-130s were launched. Of the 27 normally stationed at the base, only 10 to 12 were ordered to recover at Tan Son Nhut; the rest were redeployed to Cam Ranh Bay after flying their missions. At Cam Ranh Bay, the relocation caused some delays and initially downgraded C-130 efficiency, but according to the ALCC, C-130 scheduler, the move had little effect on scheduling due to cargo being generated from non-home stations, especially Bien Hoa. <sup>14/</sup> This points up the significant fact that the best ACL utilization is obtained when aircraft beddown is at the major cargo generation ports.

The C-123 crews, however, were billeted in separate housing throughout Saigon. The curfew the next day kept them indoors. As a result, the C-123s were grounded until crews could arrive from Phan Rang to fly the daily



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missions and then redeploy at Phan Rang. Within 48 hours, Tan Son Nhut C-123 crews were flown to Phan Rang, where they reaccepted their aircraft and continued operations from that base throughout the following week.

Restoration of daily tonnage to pre-Tet levels by 3 February did not mean a resumption of normal operations. Normally the ALCC scheduled approximately 90 percent routine cargo and 10 percent emergency cargo. During the Tet Offensive, the ratio dramatically and rapidly was reversed, until almost all scheduled flights were programmed for emergency cargo and troops, and often higher emergency priorities preempted even those flights. Airlift cargo was rated as routine and priority, with the latter graded from Combat Essential to Emergency Resupply up to Tactical Emergency, the highest priority. By 2 February, the system was inundated to the point that some Combat Essential (CE) requests could not be serviced. Disruption of normal aerial resupply caused many shortages across South Vietnam, resulting in priorities being upgraded to CE. Under this impact, the emergency priority system lost much of its usefulness, and priorities within priorities had to be devised as an interim solution. <sup>15/</sup>

To cope with the large number of emergency requests, the ALCC schedulers improvised by sending out only partial frag orders. As a result, extensive rescheduling was unnecessary upon receipt of the inevitable Tactical Emergency (TE) and Emergency Resupplies (ER), they had come to expect. During the first nine days of the Offensive, the division provided 1,042 effective emergency sorties, including 79 TEs that moved 751 tons and 9,000 troops: <sup>16/</sup>

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	<u>Sorties</u>	<u>Total Tons</u>
TE	79	751
ER	342	3,799
CE	<u>621</u>	<u>5,567</u>
TOTALS	1,042	10,117

This action was compared with the quiet nine days during 7-15 January, when only one TE mission was flown. The total emergency airlift during those nine days carried only one-tenth the cargo moved during the first nine days of Tet.

The Tet Offensive continued the "rocking" effect on airlift of moving troops, equipment, and supplies from one battle site to another. This had been noticeable from November 1967 to January 1968, due to the battles of Loc Ninh (III Corps), Dak To (II Corps), and Khe Sanh (I Corps). Thus, troops and cargo moved into northern III Corps during January for the unexecuted Operation SAN ANGELO, were moved out to counter the Tet Offensive. On 2 February, a TE request moved 600 men of the 101st Airborne and their equipment from Song Be to Tan Son Nhut using 16 sorties. On the 11th, 606 airborne troops required 31 C-130 sorties on a TE request from Song Be to Hue Phu Bai. The two TEs totaled 390 tons. <sup>17/</sup>

Song Be was particularly hard hit by the disruption of routine airlift operations, since cargo moved in could not readily be moved out. In January, the 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne, required more than 200 sorties to position the brigade at Song Be for anticipated extended border operations. In one of the war's larger unit airlifts, the Tactical Airlift Liaison Officer (TALO) had coordinated an around-the-clock operation, putting well over 30

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sorties a day into the normally daylight-only airstrip using portable runway lighting. Much of that materiel and other supplies brought in by Army aircraft had to be moved out after Tet, when the brigade went to I Corps. The TALO estimated 300 C-130 sorties would be required to onload the supplies and equipment. Due to the long distance between Song Be and Hue Phu Bai, many more flying hours were required to move the materiel out than had moved it in. <sup>18/</sup>

To meet the unprecedented emergency requirements throughout South Vietnam, several actions were taken. The improvised fragging has been mentioned already. Another step was to incorporate the UC-123s into carrier service. Defoliation aircraft got into the airlift in a small way when the emergency situation necessitated additional cargo airframes. At Bien Hoa, the Tet fighting drew away VNAF personnel, who normally handled the herbicide, and soon the ground storage tanks ran dry. On 4 and 5 February, the idle UC-123s had their inflatable tanks removed and were pressed into service moving prisoners of war and cargo. Conditions after Tet encouraged the continuation of the UC-123 airlift and by the end of the month, the defoliation squadron had moved 3,521 tons. <sup>19/</sup>

The most significant step was to bring 24 C-130s into South Vietnam on TDY from the Tactical Air Command to absorb the surge requirements. After a briefing on 4 February, and a joint MACV, Seventh Air Force, and 834th Air Division meeting, a request was made for two squadrons from USSTRICOM. Approval was swift and by mid-month, 32 extra aircraft were deployed to

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PACAF, 24 of which began operating in RVN. JCS also approved the increase in the Air Force TDY level in-country from 2,700 to 4,090 men, with an additional 1,390 personnel to fly and service the extra aircraft. <sup>20/</sup>

Despite the large increase in aircraft, the airlift system was unable to revert to normal scheduling. In late February, the airlift system capability dictated a daily turnback of a thousand to two thousand tons of emergency cargo that could not be moved quickly. Further, a cycle was established that was self-perpetuating. Until emergency requests declined, the routine resupply missions could not be reestablished; but until routine resupply missions resumed, the emergency requests continued. To break the circle, at the recommendation of the MACV/ALCC ad hoc committee, an arbitrary resumption of routine service was scheduled. In addition, a major effort was made to insure that airlift users did not abuse the priority system. The following secret message was sent from COMUSMACV to all major airlift users on 1 March 1968:

*"The MACV Common Service Airlift System (CSAS) has been overtaxed for several weeks because of numerous unit moves, disruption of surface LOC's and increased tactical activity. The system has also been degraded as a result of users declaring priorities higher than are justified, by changing priorities after the cargo enters the aerial port and by establishing unrealistic required delivery dates.*

*"Although additional aircraft have been brought into SVN, immediate and continuing command action must be taken to reduce airlift requirements. Among the actions I desire each commander to take are the following:*



*Make maximum use of surface LOC's, including the measures necessary to open and secure land LOC's.*

*Move minimum essential cargo with units. Materiel such as ammunition, if readily available at destination, should not be moved but turned in at the nearest supply point.*

*Where air movement is mandatory, consider moving maximum amount of heavy equipment by other means.*

*Provide realistic RDDs.*

*Provide maximum advance notice of airlift requirement.*

*Use scheduled flights of maximum.*

*"The cooperation of all is necessary to assure the existence of a flexible airlift system, capable of reacting rapidly in emergencies." 21/*

Just after the beginning of March, the designated shift took place in which specified aircraft flew scheduled routes despite backlogged emergency requests. Normally such emergency requests would have been met but, in this instance, the scheduled flights were virtually inviolable to preemption. 22/ This scheduled flying and the stabilization of general fighting in South Vietnam (especially at Hue), allowed a rapid return to normal airlift operations. 23/ These figures tell the story:

Emergency Tonnage Airlift Forced to Turn Back

25 Feb	2,025	1 Mar	1,103	6 Mar	591
26 Feb	2,008	2 Mar	2,665	7 Mar	353
27 Feb	1,002	3 Mar	1,590	8 Mar	163
28 Feb	2,398	4 Mar	2,213	9 Mar	351
29 Feb	2,404	5 Mar	2,269		

With the normalizing of airlift operations and the passing of surge requirements, the TDY aircraft were expected to leave Vietnam. To keep pace

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with the increasing troop levels, however, and the rising tonnage requirements, Seventh Air Force projected a fleet of 88 C-130s by October 1968, and 104 by January 1969, with Cam Ranh Bay receiving nearly all the new aircraft. <sup>24/</sup> Proposals to increase facilities, manpower ceilings, and ground equipment were also made.

In summary, the impact of Tet temporarily degraded productivity. Emergency sorties rose from 2,997 in January 1968 to 5,051 in February, and from 14 percent to 24 percent of the total sorties (that excludes non-productive positioning and depositioning sorties). Tons per aircraft for the total fleet (C-7s, C-123s, and C-130s) fell from the previous three months' average of 17.9 to 16.5, with the C-130 average dropping from 34.9 to 29.0 tons. <sup>25/</sup> Thus, the airlift was saturated just before Tet, due to Khe Sanh and Operation SAN ANGELO, and the priority system was hobbled by the inundation of emergencies during Tet. Though challenged at an unprecedented level to respond to emergency airlift requests, the introduction of 24 C-130s in-country saved the airlift system from a sharp decline in total tonnage, and immediate tactical surge requirements were met.

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CHAPTER V

VNAF RESPONSE TO TET OFFENSIVE

According to the compiled report of the Air Force Advisory Group (AFGP), overall rating of the Vietnamese Air Force response to the Tet Offensive was highly satisfactory. <sup>1/</sup>

Early reports indicated that a lack of available personnel would be an extremely limiting factor, which would weaken the VNAF operational capability. This excessively low manning at the onset of the Offensive was a result of a liberal leave and pass policy which started on 27 January 1968, and was scheduled to continue until after the Lunar New Year festivities. Many of the officers and enlisted men left the immediate area, which negated the voice (Honda Motorbike) recall plan. The personnel recovery rate was high, however, approaching the normal level, three days after recall was begun.

During the critical opening hours of the Offensive, the yeoman's work fell upon those available. Fortunately, the entire Vietnamese air staff was intact, as they had been placed on alert at the beginning of Tet. Also, highly instrumental in filling the gap were U.S. Air Force Advisory Teams (AFAT). By mutual consent with the VNAF, the AFATs placed a maximum number of their members on alert or available status to augment the VNAF during the holiday period.

One team from Da Nang reported that "Without the AFAT help the mission would have failed on 30 and 31 January." <sup>2/</sup> AFAT reported: <sup>3/</sup>

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*"...if the tempo of operations had continued as it had over the first seven days without the return of personnel from leave status, the ability of the wing to continue extensive and continuous combat operations would have been questionable...."*

With one exception, the leadership provided by the VNAF commanding elements was highly satisfactory. One report even used the word "heroic". The notable exception was the Air Base Group leadership at Binh Thuy, which was reported as weak. <sup>4/</sup>

There were some examples of outstanding leadership efforts. For example, one of the squadron commanders of the 23d Tactical Wing was captured by enemy forces, but managed to escape and rejoin his unit minutes later. Also, the security force commander on the same base was surrounded in a bunker; he called in gun and rocket fire on his position and was able to withdraw with survivors. <sup>5/</sup> The 520th Squadron was able to fly 30 combat missions in a 24-hour period with only seven armament people available. Some aircraft were turned around as many as four times. <sup>6/</sup>

Total personnel losses were minimal: <sup>7/</sup>

<u>ASGD</u> <u>31 Jan</u>	<u>ASGD</u> <u>29 Feb</u>	<u>Present</u> <u>for Duty</u> <u>29 Feb</u>	<u>Casualties</u> <u>31 Jan - 29 Feb</u>	<u>AWOL or</u> <u>Desertions</u> <u>31 Jan-29 Feb</u>
16,377	16,218	14,724	76	207

The column which identifies those present for duty excludes personnel in jail, hospital, or in a training status. There was no appreciable difference between the Tet figures and those of earlier periods.

Apparently, the communist strategy was based on the assumption that

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surprise and lack of available allied manpower would carry the day. As noted, however, the on-hand personnel filled the gap until sufficient help became available, but the question that must be answered is: What was the VNAF combat performance during the period of the Tet Offensive?

The primary mission of the Vietnamese Air Force was to respond to Army of Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) requests for air support. Only when ARVN requests exceeded VNAF capabilities were USAF resources used. These parameters were not altered during the offensive.

Compared with the month of December 1967, the VNAF increased its total February 1968 strike sorties by eight percent to a total of 2,607 sorties. More important, however, during the critical period of 1-12 February, the VNAF flew more than 50 percent of their total monthly sorties. The number of immediate sorties tripled during the Offensive, reflecting VNAF support of troops-in-contact as opposed to preplanned or interdiction missions. Normally, the Air Force Advisory Group looked for an average of one combat sortie per day per possessed aircraft. This average was more than maintained. One squadron, for example, surged to better than a 2.5 sortie-per-day rate.<sup>8/</sup> There was an overall increase of 73 percent sortie effectiveness in February 1968, as compared to the entire 1967 average.

VNAF C-47 units also greatly increased their sortie rates. During the first ten days of February, they flew more than 60 percent of their previous month's total and the number of flare missions nearly trebled. Generally, flare drops in any single month averaged 9,500, but more than 25,600 flares

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were dropped in February, with 14,000 dropped during the first days. <sup>9/</sup>

The lone AC-47 of the VNAF 33d Wing, still in training status, was activated and pressed into service. The aircraft flew in support of ARVN troops in the Saigon area, and its gunners fired more than 112,000 rounds of 7.62-mm cartridges. This was the first time the VNAF used 7.62-mm ammunition. <sup>10/</sup>

The VNAF helicopter force flew 2,280 sorties in the first ten days of the offensive, roughly half of their previous month's total. This effort was accomplished with fewer aircraft because five H-34s were destroyed and eleven were damaged. The liaison squadrons flew at generally the same average sortie rates. <sup>11/</sup>

Ordnance expenditure increased at a rate comparable to the increased sortie rate. Some ordnance increases were particularly significant. For example, flares dropped had previously averaged about 270 per night, but the average for the first ten days of February was more than 1,000--occasionally exceeding 1,400 per night. This sharply increased expenditure quickly exhausted the VNAF flare supplies and support from USAF resources was required. The stockpile of other ordnance was never threatened. However, some desired ordnance philosophy was reversed. The AFGP had been making considerable headway in convincing VNAF planners to program and eventually utilize heavy bombs against their targets. With the bulk of the Tet activity in or near urban areas, the VNAF reverted to using lighter ordnance and the preponderance of loads were 2.75 rockets, 250-pound GP bombs, and 20-mm cannon. <sup>12/</sup>

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Material, communication, and aircraft losses were moderate. Two warehouses were destroyed, which degraded the operational ready rate by no more than 10 percent, until the pipeline and supply levels were replenished. Communications and electronics remained normal, with no major system out at any time. VNAF aircraft losses were: <sup>13/</sup>

<u>TYPE</u>	<u>LOSS</u>	<u>MISSING</u>	<u>MAJOR DAMAGE</u>
A-1	5	0	0
F-5	0	0	0
H-34	4	0	1
C-47	1	0	0
O-1	4	0	0
U-17	2	1	0
U-6	0	0	1
C-119	1	0	1
TOTAL	<u>17</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>3</u>

The only degradation of any significance, other than aircraft losses, was the long-range impact on the total VNAF training program. All training, both ground and air, came to a virtual standstill. Personnel sent to other bases for training had to be returned as soon as possible. <sup>14/</sup> Essentially, the Wings lost no in-house training capability, as personnel and facilities remained intact. The delay in the opening of classes, which were normally scheduled to offer training in February, however, would undoubtedly continue to affect the VNAF in subsequent months. Accordingly, the programmed calendar year training requirements might not be met. <sup>15/</sup>

The overall opinion of U.S. advisors indicated that the offensive had a cohesive effect on the VNAF, as they gained confidence in their ability to operate as a fighting unit. Specifically noted was an increase in morale and efficiency attributed to the shared hardships and success. <sup>16/</sup>

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On 2 April 1968, MACVJ-3 asked the AFGP for an update of their 29 February assessment of VNAF combat effectiveness. The chiefs of the various AFGP offices were contacted and the resultant consensus was: <sup>17/</sup>

*"...The VNAF effectiveness was equal to or better than the pre-Tet level...."*

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## CHAPTER VI

### CIVIC ACTION

As a result of the Communist Tet Campaign, the significant endeavor in Vietnam--revolutionary development--was focused on civil recovery. The outgrowth of this changed goal was a temporary reorientation of the Seventh Air Force Civic Action Program. Long-range projects were halted in favor of humanitarian projects in direct support of the Vietnamese government (GVN) recovery program.

On 4 February 1968, COMUSMACV sent a message to all Province Senior Advisors stating: <sup>1/</sup>

*"...The President of Vietnam has just issued an important decree establishing the mechanism for assisting the people of Vietnam to recover from the effects of the treacherous VC Tet Campaign. I desire that all MACV agencies assist and co-operate to the fullest extent with GVN agencies at all levels in achieving the objectives of this plan....The president has directed the Vice President to take personal charge of this effort. Ambassador Komer will direct the activities on the U.S. side...."*

On 8 February 1968, the Seventh Air Force Chief of Staff cabled all subordinate commands outlining COMUSMACV's desires. He further authorized additional funds (up to \$25,000) to each of the ten USAF bases that could be drawn on for recovery projects. <sup>2/</sup> On 16 February, the Commander, Seventh Air Force, gave the following direction to subordinate commanders: <sup>3/</sup>

*"Seventh Air Force has never had an opportunity like the present to step into the breach and aggressively support*

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*the GVN program for recovery from the VC Tet Offensive. While coordination of United States support at province level is the responsibility of the MACV/CORDS (Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support) Senior Advisor to the province chief, the responsibility of commanders to assist by bringing the full weight of U.S. efforts to bear is also clear...I expect you to give your personal attention to this important part of our total mission. All elements of the 7AF staff will support your efforts."*

As this direction indicated, the onus of the recovery program fell on the province advisors, as they were required to establish priorities and to allocate resources. Civic action funds allotted to the Air Force were to be used as a supplement when required. Realizing that monies might be needed at some bases and not required at others, a reserve of \$168,000 was held at Seventh Air Force, for distribution to high priority projects. Further, a procedural system, as follows, was established for individual base requests: The Civic Action Division (DPLG) at 7AF could approve requests up to \$500, and 7AF Civic Action Council requests in excess of \$500. As recovery projects would be authorized by the CORDS Province Senior Advisor, base commanders would have approval authority up to \$3,000 for projects which could not be supported by the GVN/CORDS resources. Projects in excess of \$3,000 would be submitted to Seventh Air Force for approval. <sup>4/</sup>

The Civil Recovery Program was considered of sufficient importance that the 7AF Civic Action Division levied a twice-weekly requirement on the ten base civic action officers to telephone their reports of local progress. These reports were consolidated and distributed to field commanders and key staff officers. The consolidated report was called the "7AF Civic Action

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News Bulletin" and gave a recap of the entire command effort, plus a base-by-base synopsis of activities with the intent of flagging productive base units when possible. <sup>5/</sup>

During the initial 10-20 days of February, Seventh Air Force support of the GVN recovery program concentrated upon providing food and shelter for the refugees. For example, the VC had raided a small village near Phan Rang Air Base on 7, 15, and 17 February, taking everything of value that the villagers had. There were 113 people in that village and the Air Force assisted in providing 1,300 pounds of rice, 120 pounds of clothing, canned food, and toys. <sup>6/</sup> Further illustrating the humanitarian efforts, the 14th Air Commando Wing at Nha Trang Air Base requested to obligate \$24,718.30 of their \$25,000 allotment. They intended to furnish lumber to the local hamlets for construction of 184 houses at an approximate cost of \$134.30 each. The Vice Commander at Nha Trang urged and received an expeditious approval of the request, as he believed the entire recovery program hinged on the procurement of housing material. <sup>7/</sup>

Total humanitarian assistance provided by Seventh Air Force between 29 January and 17 February follows: <sup>8/</sup>

## • Supplies and Dollar Value:

Food .....	\$ 6,640
Clothing .....	1,100
Building Materials .....	55,057
Tents .....	45,225
Firewood .....	5,400
Medicine .....	2,365
Public Health .....	3,889
TOTAL	\$119,676

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- Manpower in man-days: 695

- Services:

Air transport materials .....	390 ton/miles
Air evacuate refugees .....	3,373 passengers
Surface transport materials .....	2,640 ton/miles
On-base care for refugees .....	1,360 man-days
Emergency food/shelter for 3d country nationals--	826 man-days

Although USAF labor is listed, the GVN furnished almost all the labor for the recovery effort as Air Force personnel were confined to their bases. Initially, there was concern that the Vietnamese would not take the reins. This concern appeared unwarranted. The civic action officer at Phu Cat Air Base reported: 9/

*"...Perhaps one of the most significant events of the month....When civic action workers and technical assistance men became frozen to the base (due to Tet), it was feared that progress on a five room elementary school in An Nhon would be minor and supplies would disappear. Our fears proved unfounded. The Vietnamese secured the supplies, gathered workers...As a result, the Vietnamese contributed more man days to our civic action program than did our Air Force personnel...."*

Without empirical data, the Seventh Air Force civic action officers responded to the Tet recovery program on an individual as-you-go basis. Each of the ten bases reacted to the particular situation which confronted them at the time, but the central theme was aiding refugees. It was realized that in the short run, before the pacification program could be reinstated and the nation building process resumed, the refugee problem had to be resolved, damage assessed, debris cleared, and home and public facilities restored. 10/ However, as was highlighted in an April 1968, CHECO study,

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"Civic Action in RVN", humanitarian activities, though an important part of civic action, had a potential of undercutting the GVN policy of the Vietnamese people participating in social welfare.

Most of the repercussions of Tet on the 7AF civic action effort were transitory; therefore, they should not necessarily be added to the objective yardstick by which the overall program is measured. They should, however, be considered lessons learned during a separate and distinct time period:

Self-Defense Force: Many semi-organized paramilitary groups were spawned out of necessity at the height of the Tet Offensive and were being molded into an impressive Self-Defense Force. In some provinces, the force included Buddhists and Catholics, an exceptional mixture to have a sense of cooperation by Vietnamese standards. Most peasants thought that the VC were responsible for their suffering and were less sympathetic toward the VC cause. As a result, hamlets and provinces started to swing strongly toward self-defense endeavors. For example, a village adjacent to Da Nang Air Base was visited by a Civic Action Team at post-Tet. During their visit, the village chief announced he was going to build and man a defense perimeter. The USAF donated 2,000 meters of barbed wire to the project, which the villagers used for an inner defense line and to provide further protection for bunkers, they had constructed at key points. All work was accomplished without U.S. labor, and extended the southern defense line of Da Nang Air Base to a depth of one to one and a half miles at its farthest point. An observation was made that the communists had launched their Tet attack on Da Nang through this village. <sup>11/</sup>

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In the Tan Binh District near Saigon, ten security teams, comprising some 1,662 men, were created after Tet. Before that time, there were only three teams, and the Civil Operations Advisor expected many more. In another hamlet near Saigon, more than 900 men volunteered to organize a Self-Defense Force. <sup>12/</sup>

The USAF contribution to nurture this embryonic and extremely vital desire of the Vietnamese people to defend themselves was in defense-type commodities, such as concertina or barbed wire, plus wood and steel planking to build outposts and bunker covers. <sup>13/</sup>

Loss of Interpreters: The recent general mobilization ordered by the GVN, whereby eligible males up to age 33 were either recalled or drafted, left several civic action officers without an interpreter. Without the ability to converse with the Vietnamese leaders, civic action officers were greatly handicapped. <sup>14/</sup>

Security: After Tet, commanders were reluctant to allow their personnel to volunteer for work out in the hamlets where they felt personal security was lacking. Also, there was a general negative reaction on the part of many U.S. personnel, because the Tet attacks were launched by the VC forces from, in, or near, the very outlying hamlets that were being aided by base efforts. One civic action officer stated: <sup>15/</sup>

*"...some (commanders) didn't believe in a program of helping hamlet people who hadn't given warning of VC in their areas...."*

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The absence of local intelligence is well-documented by Security and Law Enforcement After Action Reports throughout the command.

Base Priority: Damage on air bases as a result of Tet drained the reservoir of volunteer workers. This was particularly noticeable in Base Civil Engineers (BCE) support, as it was the primary unit that could assist in a Civil Recovery Program. Further draining of possible sources of manpower were sandbag details, mess hall, and sanitation augmentees, and other necessary base functions normally manned by indigenous help. <sup>16/</sup>

Relief Project: The Tet Aggression Relief Project (TARP) was devised by COMUSMACV to assist in the immediate relief of Vietnamese victims, and to demonstrate compassion by members of the U.S. Armed Forces. The funds received were to be retained at organization levels and utilized in accordance with established local procedures.

The MACV program preempted a 7AF program that had been envisioned along the same line as TARP. The 7AF planning staff wanted to extend its plan and MACV's to include USAF members in CONUS with an appeal to help in the overall war effort. It was felt at higher headquarters that the program would not be of sufficient interest to members outside the command.

A Seventh Air Force quarterly report (Jan-Mar 68) was sent to PACAF with an evaluation of the Vietnam Civic Action Program, which included the statement, "There are no insurmountable problems." <sup>17/</sup> Although this was, perhaps, a somewhat optimistic observation, for an organization that assumed an official civic action role as late as 1966, the response during Tet reflected a definite maturity.

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CHAPTER VII

LEVEL OF EFFORT

Comparing air operations of the peak period (30 Jan - 7 Feb) with the nine days preceding the offensive (21 - 29 Jan), disclosed that not only was air capability not crippled, but its intensity was substantially increased. This comparative table, listing attack sorties in the two periods, shows no decrease in sorties flown. Actually, sorties increased by 190, from 5,438 preceding the attacks, to 5,628 in the period immediately after them. The increase is largely attributable to 7AF sorties, which rose from 2,612 to 3,417. <sup>1/</sup>

CORPS	USAF	RAAF	VNAF	USMC	CORPS	USAF	RAAF	VNAF	USMC
I	620*	11	207	1,914	I	811*	19	163	1,548
II	785	24	40	-	II	1,112	27	82	-
III	919	26	334	-	III	984	20	203	-
IV	288	20	169	-	IV	500	7	153	-
TOTALS	2,612	81	750	1,914		3,407	73	601	1,548

Allied attack sorties for the entire month of February 1968 (a 29-day month) were 19,838 compared to 17,813 for January 1968, a rise of 2,025. USAF sorties rose to 10,288, an increase of 420, reflecting a drop after the early February surge. <sup>2/</sup>

\* In-Country only. In support of Operation NIAGARA (Khe Sanh), which encompassed the Laotian Border areas, a total of 2,883 sorties were flown.



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Normally 38 fighters were fragged for ground alert, but as soon as the magnitude of the fighting became apparent, Seventh Air Force TACC raised to 60 the number of alert aircraft for scramble purposes. Beginning at 0001 hours on 1 February, two F-100s provided continuous aircap for the Saigon - Tan Son Nhut area until daylight. The same protection was provided by F-100 and A-37 fighters on the next two nights, and then the aircap was discontinued because these aircraft were not called to expend ordnance. <sup>3/</sup>

Response time is extremely important to the requestor, and reflects a measure of effectiveness of air support. Comparing requests for a two-day period (20 - 21 Jan 68), with the first five days of the Offensive, reveals that response time was shortened during the height of activity, despite the great increase in requests from troops-in-contact. On 20 and 21 January, there were 112 immediate air requests; average time for scramble aircraft to flush was 20.1 minutes. During the five days beginning on 30 January, there were 418 requests for immediate air support, with an average time of 18.7 minutes to scramble in response. <sup>4/</sup> These figures do not include those diverted aircraft already airborne, whose response time was even faster.

If this study were to give the impression that every request was met within a 20-minute period, it would of course be false. For instance, during an extended period, requests were limited to "troops-in-contact" to make certain that aircraft would be available when this occurred. This ruled out other lucrative targets, at least on an immediate basis. Also, scramble time was one factor, but to that must be added en route time, and time for briefing by the FAC, once the fighters had arrived in the target area. Finally, the

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18.7-minute scramble time was an average which included several five, six, or eight-minute scrambles, but also included some on the order of an hour, as when many ground units found themselves in contact at the same time. Night contacts required flares, and the many calls for AC-47s spread that resource thin: 29 AC-47 sorties were logged the night of 30 January and on the morning of 31 January. <sup>5/</sup>

The question of tactical response cannot be answered by solely enumerating sortie rates, ordnance expenditures, or flare drops, but the statistics are vital to complete the air portrait. The AC-47 gunships concentrated on III and IV Corps expended approximately 75 percent of their 7.62-mm mini-gun ordnance. Most USAF FAC sorties were flown in support of II and III Corps operations, with most directing airstrikes in lieu of visual reconnaissance. <sup>6/</sup>

Distribution by Corps area, for USAF activities during the period 30 January to 15 February (there was no perceptible change in tactical air from normal activities during the "second phase"--hence the meaningful statistics occurred in early February), is as follows: <sup>7/</sup>

Corps Area	CAS Sorties	Interdiction Sorties	ORD TONS EXP
I	1,105	383	2,688.27
II	1,317	415	2,649.10
III	1,389	536	2,830.76
IV	538	396	1,376.55
TOTALS	4,349	1,730	9,544.68

The totals show 6,079 attack sorties over the 17-day period, or an average of 357 sorties in-country each day. This compares to an average of

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290 sorties per day immediately preceding the offensive. Tons of ordnance per sortie averaged 1.57, an increase over the standard of approximately 1.50.

The preponderance of ARC LIGHT (B-52) sorties took place in I Corps during February in support of Khe Sanh, but a significant rise took place in total in-country sorties compared to the preceding month, rising from 668 to 873. <sup>8/</sup>

Total tons of munitions delivered in-country increased from 16,425 in January to 21,316 during February with general purpose (GP) bombs nearly equaling January's total delivered ordnance. <sup>9/</sup>

USAF casualties by hostile action in SEA for February were 260, an increase of 140 from the preceding month and an increase of 130 over February 1967, representing a quantum jump of 100 percent. <sup>10/</sup>

There were 32 aircraft lost in-country, all attributable to combat, with most being destroyed on the ground. The 1967 average combat loss per month was seven. Damaged airframes accredited to combat reached a total of 297, two and a half times the 1967 average of 118. <sup>11/</sup>

The Tet attack also caused the FACs to leave many of their forward operating bases (FOB) in favor of more secure areas. In I Corps, for example, the FACs pulled out of the two northernmost provinces back to Da Nang. On a normal five-hour O-2 mission to Khe Sanh, often more than two hours were spent getting to and from the area of operation. When constant target coverage was required, the total flying time was greatly increased, putting a severe strain on crews and aircraft.

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Even at FOBs not evacuated, the security deteriorated during Tet. With 26 locations, III Corps had the most widely dispersed FOBs in-country. Early in the battle, several of the O-1 aircraft were damaged at the FOBs and re-supply of parts and supplies were cut off for a week. Excellent cross-supply support from U.S. Army elements alleviated some supply problems, particularly in smoke rockets. Also in III Corps, at Lai Khe, a heavily-shelled base, FACs were eventually forced to practically live in their bunkers, as both FAC tents were ripped due to shrapnel. In some cases, mortars would literally "follow the aircraft down the runway" on their takeoff run. <sup>12/</sup>

As reported by MACV, friendly casualties between 291800H January 1968 and 290001H February 1968 were as follows: <sup>13/</sup>

	<u>U.S.</u>	<u>ARVN</u>	<u>FW</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
KIA	1,799	3,457	89	5,345
WIA	9,687	12,596	341	22,624
MIA	36	355	0	<u>391</u>
TOTAL CASUALTIES -----				28,360

Enemy killed during February were officially reported as 39,867. In addition, more than 7,000 enemy were captured. Allowing three wounded for every enemy killed, an estimate applied to earlier campaigns, the enemy casualties would be very high, amounting to almost 160,000. <sup>14/</sup> Also, according to MACV estimates, the number of effective enemy battalions dropped from an estimated 108 - 123 battalions on 27 January, to 90 - 97 battalions on 24 February. Allowing 500 men to a battalion, it appeared that the enemy

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may have lost 12,500 men from his hard-core ranks. <sup>15/</sup>

Despite the enemy losses, major threats to specific allied areas such as the Saigon - Bien Hoa area still existed at the end of February. However, MACV pointed out a number of enemy vulnerabilities. The following is extracted from the MACV Weekly Review of Significant Intelligence for 24 February. <sup>16/</sup>

*"As the reality of the enemy losses to date in his Tet offensive become known to his personnel, they will become increasingly vulnerable to psychological warfare.... In III CTZ, the 7th and 9th Divisions are operating in unfamiliar terrain with extended LOC's reaching back to sanctuaries in Cambodia. In IV CTZ, at Can Tho, enemy troops are concentrated and are vulnerable to friendly operations...."*

The evidence indicated that as a result of his offensive the enemy had a reduced capability to conduct protracted war. However, his political position, particularly abroad, was probably improved. Militarily, COMUSMACV considered Tet an enemy defeat and gave specific guidance on the steps to be taken to exploit the situation, culminating in a meeting of Free World commanders on 31 March 1968. One explicit directive was issued: "Every commander will launch a full offensive against the enemy." <sup>17/</sup>

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FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER I

1. (S) Memo for Record, subj: "Meeting with General Westmoreland", by Gen W. W. Momyer, 5 Feb 68, Doc. 1.
2. (C) Enemy Document, Hq MACV, J261, Bulletin No 9318, 6 Feb 68, Doc. 2.
3. (C) Monthly Report, MACV, NVN Infiltration, MACJ 286, 4 Feb 68.
4. (S) Study, 7AF, Project CHECO, "VC Offensive in III Corps, October - December 1967", 15 May 68, p 18; Rpt, "USMACV Year-End Wrap-up Report CY 67", MACV J-341, 3 Feb 68, p 1 and 9.
5. (S) Msg, DOSR, 7AF to CINCPACAF, "Special Loss/Damage Report 29 Jan to 17 Feb 68", 9 Mar 68.
6. (S) Msg, DIA INTBUL 3468, 04/0356, Feb 68.  
(C) Rpt, Hq 7AF, "In Country Intelligence Summary", 10 Feb 68.
7. (U) Article, TIME Magazine, (Asia Edition), 16 Feb 68, p. 20;  
NEWSWEEK.
8. (U) Ibid.
9. (SNF) WAIS, 7AF, "The VC Expand the Use of Rockets," 9 Mar 68, pp. 3-6;  
WAIS, 7AF, "Operation Bien Hoa," 23 Mar 68, pp 4-5.
10. (C) Interview, Lt Col Thomas P. Garvin, ALO, 25th Inf Div, Hau Nghia Province, 12 Mar 68, Doc. 3.
11. (C) Working Papers, 19th TASS, "Flying Hours on FAC and VR Missions," 9 Mar 68.
12. (C) Enemy Document, Hq MACV, J261, Bulletin No. 10,759, 28 Mar 68, Doc. 4.
13. (C) Enemy Document, Hq MACV, J261, Bulletin No. 10,466, 19 Mar 68, Doc. 5.
14. (C) Enemy Document, DOD Intelligence Information Rpt, No 6-027-2179-68, 13 Mar 68, Doc. 6.
15. (S) Memo, DIS to DOAC, 7AF, "CHECO Report 'The Battle for Dak To'", Undated.
16. (S) Weekly Intelligence Estimate Update, J-2 MACV, No 9-68, 2 Mar 68.



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17. (C) DISUM, J-2 MACV, 84-28, 24 Mar 68.
18. (C) Enemy Document, Hq MACV, J261, Bulletin No. 9698, 22 Feb 68, Doc. 7.
19. (S) Rpts, "Readiness and Response to Tet Offensive," 30 Jan - 2 Feb 68, AFAT 2,3,4,5,6,7.

## CHAPTER II

1. (C) Msg, MACV, Daily Journal (Command Center Log) 300613H Jan 68.
2. (C) Rpt, IGS, 7AF to CINCPACAF, Interim After Action Report, 9 Feb 68.
3. (S) Msg, DIA INTBUL 31-68, Far East Summary, 1 Feb 68.
4. (C) After Action Report, "Tan Son Nhut AB, 31 Jan 68," 377CSG, Tan Son Nhut AB, 9 Mar 68.
5. (C) Ibid.
6. (C) Ibid.
7. (C) Interview, Lt Col Garret, Senior Army Advisor to IGB, 7AF, Tan Son Nhut AB, 14 Feb 68.
8. (C) After Action Report, "Tan Son Nhut AB, 31 Jan 68", 377CSG, Tan Son Nhut AB, 9 Mar 68.
9. (C) Msg, COMUSMACV.
10. (C) After Action Report, "Tan Son Nhut AB, 18 Feb 68," 377CSG, Tan Son Nhut AB, 18 Mar 68.
11. (C) Ibid.
12. (C) Ibid.
13. (C) After Action Report, "Bien Hoa AB, 31 Jan 68," 3CSG, Bien Hoa AB, Undated.
14. (C) Rpt, 7AF, CHECO Digest, "Enemy Attacks on Bien Hoa Air Base--31 Jan-18 Feb 68," Mar 68.
15. (C) After Action Report, "Bien Hoa AB, 31 Jan 68, 3CSG, Bien Hoa AB, undated.
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22. (C) Interview, Lt Col Harold E. Barr, Dir of Security Police, IGS, 7AF, 20 Feb 68.
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3. (C) Interview, Lt Col Robert C. Mason, ALO, 18th ARVN Div, Xuan Loc, 29 Feb 68. Doc. 12.
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11. (S) History III MAF, Feb 68.
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19. (C) Interview, Capt David Anderson, UC-123 Scheduler, 834th Air Division, 1 Feb 68; (S) TAPA, 834th Air Division, Feb 68.
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- (S) Review of notes in AFGP on Response to MACVJ-3 Request, 15 Apr 68.

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- 2. (U) Msg, CS, 7AF, to subordinate commands, "Support of GVN Recovery Effort," 8 Feb 68.
- 3. (U) Ltr, Gen William W. Momyer, Comdr, 7AF, subj: Command Support of GVN Recovery for VC Tet Campaign, 19 Feb 68.
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- 5. (U) Rpt, Col William S. Underwood, DPLG, 7AF, "Civic Action Survey and Reporting System," 16 Feb 68.
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## APPENDIX I SUMMARY OF AIRSTRIKES City Strikes Near Tan Hoa - Tan Phu Trung

<u>FEB</u>	<u>ACFT</u>	<u>COORDINATES</u>	<u>REMARKS</u>
3	2 F-4C	XT 690146	Line of Communication
3	2 F-100	XT 691147	VC position
6	2 A-37	XT 694121	TIC
6	2 F-100	XT 681120	TIC
6	2 F-100	XT 695125	TIC
8	2 F-4	XT 701089	Pre-Strike
8	2 F-100	XT 701089	VC Position
8	2 F-100	XT 703089	TIC
8	2 F-100	XT 703088	TIC
8	2 F-100	XT 703088	TIC
9	2 F-4	XT 690145	TIC
9	2 F-100	XT 690145	TIC
9	2 F-100	XT 681148	TIC
9	2 A-37	XT 702090	TIC
9	2 F-100	XT 702090	TIC
10	2 F-100	XT 695145	SEL
10	2 F-100	XT 691142	TIC
10	2 F-4	XT 690145	TIC
10	2 F-100	XT 691146	TIC
10	2 F-4	XT 714146	TIC
10	2 F-100	XT 715148	TIC
11	2 A-37	XT 703143	
11	2 A-1	XT 715148	
12	2 A-37	XT 703146	SEL
12	2 F-100	XT 698149	TIC
12	2 F-100	XT 698151	TIC
12	2 A-1	XT 713149	
13	2 F-100	XT 699152	
13	2 F-100	XT 698153	
13	2 A-37	XT 713150	SEL
13	2 F-4	XT 698152	
13	2 F-100	XT 697093	TIC
13	2 F-100	XT 697093	TIC
13	2 F-100	XT 697093	TIC
13	2 F-100	XT 697152	TIC
13	2 A-1	XT 713150	Base Camp
14	2 F-100	XT 700089	VC Position
14	2 F-100	XT 698089	VC Position
14	2 F-100	XT 699092	VC Position
14	2 F-4	XT 697090	VC Position
14	2 F-100	XT 702088	VC Concentration

\*TIC=Troops in Contact

SEL=Suspected Enemy Location

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## USAF STRIKES AT HUE

<u>FEB</u>	<u>ACFT</u>	<u>COORDINATES</u>	<u>KBA</u>	<u>STRUCTURE</u>	<u>REMARKS</u>
2	2 F-4C	YD 749230	1	10	AIR CAP - Eight Secondary Explosions. Three Secondary Fires 12 Veh Dam NVA in Open
2	2 F-100	YD 695242			UNK
5	1 F-100	YD 72451785			UNK
5	1 F-100	YD 73445177			UNK
*6	1 F-4B	YD 69002435			UNK
*6	1 F-4B	YD 69002435			UNK
6	2 F-100	YD 71501720			UNK
6	2 F-100	YD 69152375			UNK
6	2 F-100	YD 69152475			UNK
7	2 F-4C	YD 75232160			UNK
7	2 F-4C	YD 74652178			UNK
7	3 F-100	YD 73602400			UNK
7	3 F-100	YD 73282237			UNK
7	3 F-100	YD 74882150			UNK
*7	1 A-4	YD 74872170			UNK
*7	1 A-4	YD 74602195			UNK
*7	1 A-4	YD 74652180			UNK
*8	1 A-4	YD 74052177			UNK
8	1 F-4	YD 73852285			UNK
8	2 F-100	YD 74372195			UNK
8	1 F-4	YD 74052265			UNK
8	2 F-4	YD 74202245			UNK
8	2 F-4	YD 74452210			UNK
8	2 F-100	YD 73502400			UNK
8	2 F-100	YD 73352218			UNK
10	2 F-100	YD 73422191			UNK
10	2 F-100	YD 73002350			UNK
13	2 F-100	YD 730218			VC Concentration
13	2 F-100	YD 730218			VC Concentration
13	1 F-100	YD 73502440			VC-Trails-Huts-Bunkers
14	2 F-100	YD 69202440			6th NVA Hqs (Pre-planned)
14	2 F-4	YD 72401720			UNK
14	2 F-100	YD 737230			UNK
14	2 A-37	YD 737230	5	4	Troops-in-Contact
14	2 F-100	YD 740230	15	10	Troops-in-Contact
14	2 F-100	YD 692244		4	6th Reg Hqs
14	2 F-100	YD 746220	5	6	Troops-in-Contact
14	2 F-4	YD 730220	10	22	NVA Battalion
					Two Secondary Fires
15	2 F-100	YD 744220		10	Troops-in-Contact
15	2 F-100	YD 746220		6	Troops-in-Contact
15	2 F-100	YD 747218		6	Troops-in-Contact
15	2 F-4C	YD 727218		15	Secondary Explosion
					Secondary Fire - NVA in open

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<u>FEB</u>	<u>ACFT</u>	<u>COORDINATES</u>	<u>KBA</u>	<u>STRUCTURE</u>	<u>REMARKS</u>
16	2 F-100	YD 747218		4	Troops-in-Contact
16	2 F-100	YD 7440	Not Plotted	5	Troops-in-Contact
18	2 F-4	YD 69292430			Fortified Position
18	2 F-100	YD 69802380			Fortified Position
22	2 A-37	YD 744221		4	
27	2 F-100	YD 768182		7	Troops-in-Contact
27	2 F-100	YD 763158		2	Troops-in-Contact
*28	2 A-4	YD 791214		10	VC in Open
*28	2 A-4	YD 791254		7	VC Concentration
*28	2 F-4	YD 791254		12	VC Concentration
28	2 F-100	YD 772256		3	Two Secondary Explosions, Bunkers and Trenches
*29	2 F-4	YD 746167		6	Troops-in-Contact
29	2 F-100	YD 746167		4	Troops-in-Contact

## TOTALS

<u>STRIKE SORTIES</u>	<u>KBA</u>	<u>STRUCTURES</u>
90	36	129

\* Known U.S. Marine Strikes

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## USAF STRIKES ON DALAT

<u>FEB</u>	<u>ACFT</u>	<u>COORDINATES</u>	<u>KBA</u>	<u>STRUCTURES</u>	<u>REMARKS</u>
1	2 F-4	BP 170214	3	Damaged or Destroyed	VC in open
1	3 F-100	BP 170214	50		Mortar Position
1	2 F-100	BP 170214			Mortar Position
2	2 F-4	BP 202197	3		Defensive Position
2	2 F-100	BP 208230	3		Defensive Position
2	2 F-100	BP 191205			Defensive Position
2	2 F-100	BP 191205			Defensive Position
3	2 F-100	BP 175215			Mortar Position and VC
3	2 F-100	BP 175215			Mortar Position and VC
4	2 F-100	BP 245207	10		VC
4	2 F-100	BP 245207	5		VC
4	2 F-100	BP 199228	3	7	Troops-in-Contact
5	2 F-4	BP 19352018	10	40	Troops-in-Contact
5	2 A-37	BP 204226	15	25	Troops-in-Contact
6	2 F-100	BP 19152045	8		VC Battalion
6	2 F-100	BP 202199	1		Two Companies of VC
8	2 F-4	BP 199199	1		Structures
8	2 B-57	BP 203101			Structures
9	2 F-100	BP 204227		3	Known Enemy Location
9	2 F-4C	BP 204227		30	Known Enemy Location
12	2 F-100	BP 193238		4	VC Base Camp
12	2 F-100	BP 193238			VC Base Camp
12	2 F-100	BP 193238		14	VC Base Camp

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## VNAF STRIKES ON DALAT

<u>FEB</u>	<u>ACFT</u>	<u>COORDINATES</u>	<u>KBA</u>	<u>STRUCTURES (Damaged or Destroyed)</u>
8	3 A-1H	BP 203191		5
9	2 A-1H	BP 204226		
9	2 A-1H	BP 204226		
9	2 A-1H	BP 204229		15
9	2 A-1H	BP 204229		5
9	2 A-1H	BP 204229		
9	2 A-1H	BP 204229		10
9	2 A-1H	BP 200233		8
9	2 A-1H	BP 203191	10	20
10	2 A-1H	BP 204228		
10	2 A-1H	BP 202229		
10	2 A-1H	BP 203298		
11	2 A-1H	BP 190215		13

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## CITY STRIKES NEAR BEN TRE

<u>FEB</u>	<u>ACFT</u>	<u>COORDINATES</u>	<u>KBA</u>	<u>STRUCTURES</u>	<u>REMARKS</u>
1	2 F-100	XS 526338 XS 533334			One VC Battalion
1	2 F-100	XS 463336 XS 467347	10	15	Troops-in Contact
2	2 F-100	XS 542303		1	
2	2 F-100	XS 516333		10	Troops-in-Contact
2	2 F-100	XS 525315		61	Troops-in-Contact
2	2 F-4	XS 525316	5	42	Troops-in-Contact
3	2 F-100	XS 521318		10	Troops-in-Contact
3	2 F-100	XS 518325			Troops-in-Contact
3	2 F-100	XS 529338		8	VC Battalion
3	2 F-100	XS 529338		11	VC Battalion
3	2 F-4	XS 506307	3	23	Mortar Position
3	2 F-4	XS 541322	7	19	Battalion Headquarters
3	2 F-100	XS 527318		15	VC Camp
3	2 F-100	XS 530324		8	Troops-in-Contact
3	2 F-4	XS 527327		11	VC Position
3	2 F-100	XS 518320		2	VC Company
3	2 F-100	XS 478323		2	200 VC
4	2 A-37	XS 526356	3	11	
4	2 F-100	XS 542350		11	Battalion
4	2 F-100	XS 542350		15	Battalion
5	2 F-100	XS 535353		4	300 VC

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## APPENDIX II CARGO MOVEMENTS

	<u>Emergency Cargo Moved</u>	<u>On Hand Cargo Backlogged</u>	<u>Total Cargo Available</u>	<u>Percent Over 7 Days</u>	
Jan					
1	196	1,202	5,014	2	
2	211	1,135	4,472	1	
3	326	1,039	4,995	1	
4	160	1,404	4,412	1	
5	407	1,462	4,934	1	
6	74	1,290	4,532	1	
7	274	1,457	4,677	1	
8	31	1,301	4,725	0	
9	88	1,414	5,493	9	
10	200	1,523	5,256	2	
11	49	1,594	4,947	2	
12	36	1,712	5,375	3	
13	48	1,700	5,925	5	
14	222	1,777	5,997	4	
15	120	1,971	5,020	7	
16	622	1,887	5,592	4	
17	1,203	2,255	6,554	4	
18	1,299	2,228	6,660	4	
19	1,504	2,246	6,901	6	
20	1,258	2,238	6,611	9	
21	1,343	2,332	7,349	16	
22	1,421	2,206	9,060	18	
23	1,506	2,176	8,723	26	
24	2,400	2,563	9,946	19	
25	1,903	2,621	9,755	20	
26	1,903	2,409	9,661	24	
27	1,813	2,173	9,561	25	
28	1,373	2,648	9,287	21	
29	1,692	2,822	9,446	22	
30	974	2,757	8,241	28	
31		D A T A	N O T	A V A I L A B L E	
Feb					
1		D A T A	N O T	A V A I L A B L E	
2		D A T A	N O T	A V A I L A B L E	
3	2,909		1,701	8,125	49
4	3,083		1,817	8,029	44
5	2,476		1,671	7,818	45
6	2,345		1,970	7,709	35
7	2,015		2,018	8,305	34
8	1,953		1,912	8,614	35
9	1,861		1,857	7,513	28
10	1,709		1,950	7,822	24
11	1,117		1,864	7,277	30
12	1,701		1,569	7,101	25
13	1,863		1,598	8,001	19



# UNCLASSIFIED

	<u>Emergency Cargo Moved</u>	<u>On Hand Cargo Backlogged</u>	<u>Total Cargo Available</u>	<u>Percent Over 7 Days</u>
Feb				
14	2,045	1,770	5,649	15
15	1,516	1,616	5,962	15
16	1,612	1,614	4,967	12
17	1,597	1,469	4,946	13
18	1,277	1,755	5,448	10
19	2,040	1,757	5,615	11
20	1,903	2,135	5,705	10
21	1,963	2,398	7,361	*
22	2,310	2,408	6,900	*
23	2,776	2,479	7,685	*
24	5,121	2,624	9,855	*
25	4,505	2,642	10,144	*
26	4,854	2,882	11,385	*
27	3,532	2,504	9,248	*
28	4,325	2,621	10,393	*
29	3,979	2,379	10,024	*

\* DATA UNAVAILABLE

# UNCLASSIFIED

## GLOSSARY

ACL	Allowable Cargo Load
AFAT	Air Force Advisory Team
AFGP	Air Force Advisory Group
ALCC	Airlift Control Center
ALO	Air Liaison Officer
ARVN	Army of Republic of Vietnam
BCE	Base Civil Engineers
CAS	Close Air Support
CE	Combat Essential
CHECO	Contemporary Historical Evaluation of Combat Operations
COC	Combat Operations Center
COMUSMACV	Commander, U.S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam
CONUS	Continental United States
CORDS	Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support
CSAS	Common Service Airlift System
CTZ	Corps Tactical Zone
DEPCOMUSMACV	Deputy Commander, U.S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam
DMZ	Demilitarized Zone
ER	Emergency Resupplies
FAC	Forward Air Controller
FOB	Forward Operating Base
GP	General Purpose
GVN	Vietnamese Government
JCS	Joint Chiefs of Staff
KBA	Killed by Air
KIA	Killed in Action
LFT	Light Fire Team
LOC	Line of Communications
MACV	Military Assistance Command, Vietnam
mm	millimeter
NLF	National Liberation Front
NVA	North Vietnamese Army



# UNCLASSIFIED

PACAF	Pacific Air Forces
POW	Prisoner of War
QRF	Quick Reaction Force
QRT	Quick Reaction Team
RDD	Required Delivery Date
RDP	Revolutionary Development Program
Recce	Reconnaissance
RPG	Rocket Propelled Grenade
RVN	Republic of Vietnam
RVNAF	Republic of Vietnam Air Force
SEA	Southeast Asia
TACC	Tactical Air Control Center
TALO	Tactical Airlift Liaison Office
TARP	Tet Aggression Relief Project
TDY	Temporary Duty
TE	Tactical Emergency
TFW	Tactical Fighter Wing
TOC	Tactical Operations Center
USSTRICOM	U.S. Strike Command
VC	Viet Cong
VNAF	Vietnamese Air Force

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